

Warning of flying urine at football matches

Headmaster says slack pupils

Saudi wife sues Viagra distributor

Huge omelette for village feast

Could be used for village feast

Government welcomes suspension of Libya sanctions

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan on Tuesday welcomed the suspension of U.N. sanctions imposed on Libya since 1992, describing the development as "positive." Foreign Minister Abdul Dah Khatib said Jordan sincerely hopes and looks forward to seeing a formal end to the sanctions against Libya, following the country's handover of two Libyans accused of the 1988 Pan Am bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland. Khatib commended Libya's cooperation with and support for international initiatives to put an end to the affair. Jordan has acceded to a Libyan request to resume regular flights between both countries.

Jordan Times

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NATO rejects Belgrade call for Kosovo ceasefire, pledges 'biggest' attack yet

UNHCR says Yugoslavia responsible for 'unprecedented' rights violations; at least 12 killed in NATO attack on town.

Agencies

YUGOSLAVIA DECLARED a "unilateral cease-fire" in Kosovo starting Tuesday evening, but the offer was swiftly rejected by European governments and the United States, with only Russia and the Vatican reacting positively.

The offer was Belgrade's first concrete political initiative since the start of the NATO bombing campaign against Yugoslavia on March 24.

In a joint statement, the Yugoslav and Serbian government said "all army and police activities in Kosovo" against the insurgent separatist Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) "should be stopped unilaterally, starting at 8:00 p.m. (1800 GMT)."

Both governments expected the decision, ahead of Orthodox Easter this weekend, "will be understood as a goodwill gesture and wish for support for peaceful solution."

The statement also called on Kosovo Albanian moderate leader Ibrahim Rugova to help prepare a "provisional accord" providing "substantial autonomy" for the province, and to jointly prepare "a programme for the return of refugees to Kosovo."

Some 450,000 have left since the NATO bombing began.

But the United States immediately rejected the ceasefire, and Britain said it "falls well short" of NATO demands for the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo and acceptance of an international peace-keeping force.

France, Germany, Italy and Turkey also rejected the initiative as insufficient.

French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine and his British counterpart Robin Cook submitted five questions to Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, stating that a positive answer to all of them was needed for the offer to be meaningful.

They asked whether Milosevic was ready to abide by a "verifiable" halt of the Serb offensive on Kosovo, to withdraw his forces including police and paramilitary units and to accept refugee return.

They also asked him to commit to a political settlement on the basis of the Rambouillet accord reached in France last month and to accept the deployment of an international force in Kosovo.

"We wait an urgent answer," the letters sent to Milosevic said.

The KLA viewed the Yugoslav move as a bid to stave off further NATO attacks and present the Milosevic government as interested in resolving the crisis without capitulating to the West.

Deputy Prime Minister Vuk Draskovic said if NATO pressed ahead with air strikes now, "it would be very clear... NATO is against peace."

The ceasefire appeal came after NATO claimed its attacks overnight Monday were the most intensive thus far and warned that its attacks overnight Tuesday would be even more ferocious. NATO planes and missiles blasted fuel depots, oil refineries, roads and bridges in an intensive night of air raids across Yugoslavia.

It also followed NATO admissions that one of its bombs had fallen short of its target, killing 12 civilians and injuring 28 others in the small Serbian mining town of Aleksinac.

NATO said Tuesday during an allied briefing that its weapons had targeted a nearby military post but there was "evidence of damage 600 metres just short of the target."

The missile devastated the main street in the town, and Yugoslav authorities compared the destruction to Nazi atrocities.

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Ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo leave a plane after their arrival at Corlu airport in the western Turkish city of Kizilirmak on Tuesday. More than 1,000 weak and exhausted Kosovo refugees landed in western Turkey overnight at the start of a planned airlift of 20,000 people ejected from their homes by Serb forces (AP photo)

In Aleksinac, two bodies, along with pools of blood and human body parts, could be seen in the wreckage of the apartment building. Bricks and roof tiles were strewn about, hundreds of metres from the blast.

NATO Air Commodore David Wilby said it was possible one of the weapons "fell short" due to a guidance system fault, incoming fire or another cause and that "any unintended damage" is "very much regretted."

Despite better weather, however, a NATO spokesman acknowledged Tuesday that raids in Kosovo itself had failed to stop Milosevic's forces from continuing their attacks on ethnic Albanians.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and French President Jacques Chirac both described Milosevic's offer as "indispensable but insufficient." Italy's Premier Massimo D'Alema said: "I share the opinion of our allies."

(Continued on page 2)

King performs Umra in Mecca, visits Medina

MECCA (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Tuesday performed the lesser pilgrimage (Umra) in Mecca and prayed at the Al Masjid Al Haram.

King Abdullah, on the third day of his visit to Saudi Arabia, was accompanied by members of the Royal family, the Senate president, chief of the Royal Court, former prime ministers, head of the Judicial Council, minister of Awqaf and Islamic affairs, and director of the General Intelligence Department, as well as senior Royal Court officials.

Later Tuesday, King Abdullah left for Jordan after visiting Medina, where he performed prayers and recited verses of the Holy Quran at the Prophet Mohammad's mosque and grave. The King also recited verses of the Quran at Al Baqi'a cemetery for the souls of the Prophet's companions.

The King, who held talks earlier with King Fahd and Saudi royal family members, Tuesday met with Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal for talks on means of strengthening Jordanian-Saudi ties. King Abdullah and Prince Faisal reviewed issues of common concern to the two countries.

King Abdullah held also talks with Saudi Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz on bilateral relations and issues of common concern, as well as the peace process, the situation in Iraq and the reported ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. The views of both sides were identical.

The two sides stressed their interest in strengthening bilateral relations and broadening cooperation in all fields.

They also expressed their interest in and determination

to advance inter-Arab relations, saying that they will exert every possible effort to restore Arab solidarity and reconcile Arab stands to help confront challenges facing the nation.

The meeting was attended by senior Jordanian and Saudi officials.

King Abdullah also met with Interior Minister Nayef Ben Abdul Aziz to discuss issues of mutual concern, focusing on Jordanian labour in Saudi Arabia and the possibility of increasing the number of Jordanian workers there.

The two sides also discussed such issues as Saudi tourism to Jordan and facilitating visits by Saudis to the Kingdom.

King Abdullah expressed Jordan's appreciation to Saudi Arabia for its support and interest in further strengthening relations with the Kingdom in all fields.

Tensions ease in Jordan-Israel water dispute, officials say

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — The government on Tuesday hinted that tensions have eased over the Jordanian-Israeli water dispute that erupted after the Jewish state proposed cutting water supplies promised to Jordan in agreements between both sides.

During a meeting of the Joint Water Committee on Monday, Minister of Water and Irrigation Kamel Mahadin said "Israel stressed its commitment to the 1994 peace treaty."

Adding that the two countries had reached what he termed a "substantial thaw," Mahadin, said the committee will meet again next week to discuss the issue further.

He gave no additional details. Last month, Jordan strongly rejected Israel's request to cut water supplies by 40 per cent and insisted on obtaining its full share stipulated in the treaty's water annex.

Jordan Valley Authority Secretary General Dureid Mahasneh, who heads the Kingdom's side of the joint committee, said on Tuesday there are "many positive signs, but the issue is still there."

Israel had cited the region's seasonal drought as the reason for cutting back on its obligation.

The peace deal stipulates that Israel extracts 12 mcm of water from the Yarmouk River in summer, and Jordan uses the rest. In winter, Israel takes 33 mcm from the river, of which 20 mcm are stored for Jordan in Lake Tiberias for the Kingdom's use in summer.

But in March, Israel said it was not able to collect the 20 mcm from the Yarmouk this winter because of the drought.

"Although nothing concrete has been achieved yet, both sides are negotiating in a good and positive atmosphere, and we have a feeling they are approaching a solution," Roey Gilad, Israeli embassy spokesman, told the Jordan Times.

According to the treaty, Jordan and Israel should cooperate to supply the Kingdom with an additional quantity of 50 mcm of potable water every year.

In 1997, the two countries agreed that the 50 mcm should be obtained through the desalination of brackish water flowing into the Jordan River from the Israeli side. At the same time, they agreed that until a desalination plant is set up, Israel will supply the Kingdom with 25 mcm a year from Lake Tiberias. But Israel has said it cannot meet this commitment this year.

Officials said that because no formal announcement was made by the Israeli cabinet about reducing the water supplies, it is too early to conclude that cutting the water amount is the Jewish state's official stand.

Jordan, which officially declared a state of drought in January, relies mainly on rainwater to meet domestic, agricultural and industrial needs. Rainfall, which dipped to just two per cent of the seasonal average in December and January, accounts for about 60 per cent of Jordan's water supply.

The deficit in domestic use by the end of 1999 is projected to reach approximately 10 per cent, with demand totalling 283 mcm and supply amounting to 254 mcm.

Thus, water experts say, the situation in the Kingdom is worse because for Israel it is an economic issue but for Jordan it is a matter of survival.

According to recent statistics, water levels in the King Talal Dam dropped from 72 mcm to 33.1 mcm, Wadi Arab Dam from 16 mcm to 9.8 mcm, Ziglab Dam from 3.5 mcm to 1.2 mcm, Sha'eb Dam from 1.34 mcm to 341,000 cubic metres, and Kafra Dam from 8.5 mcm to 372,000 cubic metres, while the desert and Karameh dams are nearly empty.

In submitting his policy statement on Saturday, Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, in line with His Majesty King Abdullah's call for immediate action to cope with problem, hinted that severe measures might be taken to stave off the possible water crisis.

Such measures would include taking control of 1,650 privately-owned wells, whose owners allegedly are exploiting an estimated 320 mcm of water annually, rationing water consumption and limiting agricultural production to less water-intensive crops.

At present, around 650 mcm of water per year are used for agriculture, part of which is non-renewable. The Water Authority said it would reduce the amount of water pumped to the Southern Ghor region for agricultural use by 50 per cent, to the Northern Ghor by 20 per cent and to the Central Ghor by 10 per cent.

By the year 2000, Jordan's population, growing at around 3.5 per cent per year, will require 1,257 mcm of water to cover minimum needs; resources will be capable of supplying only 960 mcm, according to official statistics.

Arafat holds talks with Yeltsin, Russian FM on statehood

Russia says Mideast in critical state, seeks talks

MOSCOW (R) — Russia said on Tuesday the situation in the Middle East was becoming critical and urged Israeli and Palestinian leaders to hold urgent peace talks with U.S. and Russian officials.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, visiting Moscow on the latest stage of a foreign tour in which he is discussing his plans to declare a Palestinian state, immediately supported the call for talks.

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov proposed talks before May 4, when a five-year interim period set out in a 1994 self-rule accord with Israel runs out. He said the

signatories to the accord and U.S. and Russian officials should attend.

"We noted with deep concern that the Israeli-Palestinian peace process has been standing still for a long time. The situation is becoming critical because of the approach of May 4," Ivanov told a joint news conference with Arafat.

"It is important, before May 4, to look for an acceptable plan for agreeing on an extension to the interim period and on extra time which could be used for intensive Palestinian-Israeli talks on a final status [for Palestinian self-determination]."

Arafat faces pressure to delay declaring statehood, at least until after Israel holds an election on May 17.

He said he supported Russia's proposal for talks but that it did not mean he was abandoning plans to declare an independent Palestinian state.

"We warmly welcome the Russian proposal," he said. "We have not taken a final decision yet on the May 4 problem as consultations have not yet finished with Arab states and foreign states."

He said his visit to Russia was a major step on the path to taking that decision.

He arrived in Moscow on Monday after trips to Turkey and Jordan and ahead of visits to Japan and China. He has also had talks in recent weeks with U.S. and European leaders.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also visited Russia last month. He urged Russia to play a more active role in the Middle East peace process in its role as co-sponsor with the United States.

Russia has been trying for several years to step up its role in the Middle East, but the United States has had much more influence in the peace process.

"We constantly pursue a policy of supporting you and will support you," Yeltsin told Arafat during talks in the Kremlin.

"I highly appreciate the fact that you came to consult me and to take advice from me and Russians at this crucial moment."

Russian news agencies quoted Yeltsin as saying he favoured extending the interim period set out in the 1994 accord.

Arafat was also due to meet Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, a Middle East expert, later on Tuesday.

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House begins debate on Rawabdeh government's policy statement

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Lower House members on Tuesday started the debate on Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh's policy statement submitted to the House on Saturday amid strong expectations that the government would win the confidence of the chamber with a large number of votes.

Independent observers predict Rawabdeh will sweep more than 60 votes in the 80-member House, while only a few opposition and centrist deputies will withhold confidence in the government.

They say confidence is likely to be withheld by Deputies Bassam

Haddadin, Abdul Karim Dughmi, Mohammad Azaydeh, Sa'd Hayel Srouf, Khalil Haddadin, Saleh Hiyari, Saleh Sha'awtah and a few others.

Most of the deputies who took part in Tuesday's debate praised the policy statement and urged Rawabdeh to stick to his pledges to the House, especially in the economic and political fields.

Rawabdeh, the first premier appointed under the reign of His Majesty King Abdullah, said his government's major challenge was to lift the country from the economic recession it faces and to find solutions to poverty and unemployment, which he described as

increasing day by day.

One-third of Jordan's 4.6 million population lives below the poverty line, and unemployment is officially estimated at 16 per cent and unofficially at up to 27 per cent.

Deputy Ali Abul Ragheb, who addressed the House on behalf of the 12-member coalition bloc he heads, urged Rawabdeh to undertake several economic measures to enhance the investment environment in the country and tackle unemployment.

Abul Ragheb recommended reducing interest rates which he said impede economic development. He also urged encouraging foreign investments, curbing for-

ign labour, and upgrading the skills of the Jordanian labour force. Jordan registered negative economic growth last year, the worst since the 1989 economic crunch, blamed mainly on Middle East peace uncertainty and lack of bold economic initiatives.

Abul Ragheb urged the government to increase the Kingdom's exports to Iraq and the Palestinian market, where Israel holds a major advantage.

Jordan has repeatedly demanded that Israel reduce its security measures that hamper the flow of Jordanian goods to the Palestinian market.

Official figures showed that trade

between Jordan and the Palestinian self-rule areas has not exceeded \$30 million annually, compared to the \$500 million envisaged by a Jordanian-Palestinian trade agreement.

Abul Ragheb recommended that the government draft a national strategy to oversee the privatisation of state-owned enterprises, a controversial issue which has drawn repeated criticism from lawmakers.

"The policy statement is comprehensive and complete. It has not neglected any item... but what is more important is how to turn the statement into actions," Abul Ragheb told his fellow deputies.

In his policy statement, Rawab-

deh pledged to convert the privatisation unit at the Prime Ministry into an independent corporation that would tackle the privatisation process.

Other deputies urged the government to strengthen its relations with Arab states, especially those neighbouring the Kingdom.

King Abdullah was due to return to Amman early Wednesday following a three-day official visit to Saudi Arabia. Rawabdeh, who accompanied the King along with a large delegation of senior officials, arrived Tuesday and described Jordanian-Saudi relations as at their best.

The King is expected to visit

other Arab states, including Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Syria, Egypt, Morocco and Kuwait this month. Following the death of King Hussein on Feb. 7, several countries, including the Gulf states, expressed readiness to help Jordan through its coming challenges.

Deputies also called for a national water strategy to face expected summer shortages following low rainfall this winter.

Some deputies stressed the need to fight corruption, bureaucracy and public sector incompetence, as outlined in the premier's policy statement.

(Continued on page 2)

Israel orders closure of two Palestinian offices in Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel ordered the closure on Tuesday of two Palestinian offices in Arab east Jerusalem as part of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's attempts to cement his grip on the Holy City.

Police delivered closure orders to the office of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's advisor for Christian affairs, Ibrahim Qandalaft, and to a centre run by a prisoners' support group, police spokes-

woman Linda Menuhin said. The offices have 12 hours to appeal in writing, she said. The two offices, along with the Jerusalem bureau of the Palestinian news agency Wafa, were ordered shut by Netanyahu, who is in a tough race for reelection in May and is presenting himself to voters as the champion of Israeli sovereignty over all Jerusalem.

"The question of closing the Wafa bureau is still under discussion," an Israeli police spokesman said on Monday after Palestinian lawyers had filed an appeal against the orders. Meanwhile, the Him news agency reported that Faisal Hussein, PLO executive committee member in charge of Jerusalem, was interrogated last week for allegedly organising a recent meeting of Arafat's Fatah PLO faction in Arab east Jerusalem. Hussein refused to answer police questions and was released, him said. Israeli police confirmed Hussein had been questioned last week but offered no further details. Israeli law prohibits any official Palestinian activity in Israel, including occupied east Jerusalem, which was illegally annexed by the Jewish state in 1967. The annexation is not recognised by the Palestinians or the international community.

Iran says oil deal shows U.S. sanctions failing

TEHRAN (R) — Iranian state radio said on Tuesday that Iran's recent \$300 million oil contract with French and Canadian companies proved the inefficacy of U.S. sanctions against the Islamic republic.

"The signing of the contract on Balal oil field underscores once again that America's sanction policies against Iran are ineffective. It is a suitable ground for European and Canadian companies to take part in 40 oil and gas projects put up by Iran last year to international bids," it said in a commentary.

"There is another loss for the United States, too: American oil companies have once again been denied the opportunity to invest in Iran because of their government's bullying policies," the radio said.

The U.S. government said on Monday it was disappointed with the \$300 deal Iran signed with French Oil Major Elf Aquitaine and Canada's Bow Valley Energy Ltd. over the weekend to develop the offshore Balal field in the Gulf.

It indicated it may punish the firms for violating a U.S. law that seeks to block foreign companies from investing more than \$20 million a year in Iran's oil and natural gas sectors.

Iraqi opposition aims for unity at London meeting

DUBAI (AFP) — Iraqi opposition groups are due to meet in London on Wednesday with a U.S. envoy to try to unite under the umbrella of the Iraqi National Congress (INC), an INC spokesman said. Ahmad Allawi, contacted by telephone in London, said it would be the first meeting of more than 12 opposition groups since 1996.

The U.S. special representative for the transition of Iraq, Frank Ricciardone,

and a British Foreign Office representative will attend the meeting, he said. Allawi said the aim of the meeting of the Iraqi opposition was "to give it new impetus" under the umbrella of the INC coalition. The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) said it would take part in the INC session, attending for the first time since it called on President Saddam Hussein to send troops into northern Iraq in August 1996.

But a spokesman in London of the main Shiite Muslim opposition group said it would not take part. "Our representative in Britain is currently out of the country," said the spokesman for the Iran-based Supreme Assembly for Islamic Revolution in Iraq. Allawi said the meeting would prepare the ground for an INC assembly to elect a new leadership.



A Russian Orthodox nun is helped out of the River Jordan by an Israeli policewoman on Wednesday during a baptism ceremony at the spot where Christians believe Jesus Christ was baptised. Eastern churches will commemorate Easter on April 11 (AFP photo)

NATO rejects Belgrade call for Kosovo ceasefire, pledges 'biggest' attack yet

(Continued from page 1)

"A ceasefire brings us back to the pre-existing situation, now worsened," said a senior French government source, who asked not to be identified.

He and others noted that the proposal did not provide for the withdrawal of Belgrade's security forces from Kosovo.

Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit agreed that Belgrade's ceasefire declaration was not enough to resolve the Kosovo crisis on its own.

"It seems impossible to me for Kosovo Albanians to live together with and under the Serbian administration. There should be a new arrangement. In other words, this is not a problem to be solved through a ceasefire alone," Ecevit said.

But Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said the offer was "an opportunity to make peace in Kosovo that should not be missed."

The proposal "paves the way to a settlement of problems in Kosovo through political means," he said in a statement.

The Vatican also welcomed the offer as a "step towards peace," and called for an "open mind" toward the proposals. Pope John Paul II had earlier pleaded for an Easter ceasefire.

In Geneva, U.N. refugee chief Sadako Ogata placed the blame for the huge stream of people leaving Kosovo firmly at Yugoslavia's door, accusing Belgrade of trying to wipe out the province's identity.

Ogata, chairing an emergency meeting of more than 50 governments and aid agencies on the crisis, said "ethnic cleansing" in Kosovo may be even worse than purges seen earlier this decade in Bosnia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia.

"It is frightening... that this century, as in its darkest hours, should end with the mass deportation of innocent people," Ogata, the U.N. high commissioner for refugees, told the meeting in Geneva.

Yugoslavia's head delegate at the Geneva conference said UNHCR could not verify testimony of mass expulsions as it had no officials in Kosovo.

He said the hundreds of thousands of refugees were fleeing NATO bombing and they would all be welcome back in Yugoslavia.

UNHCR, anxious to avoid taking sides in conflicts, at first simply relayed refugee testimony when the ethnic Albanians began pouring out of Kosovo. But Ogata's remarks showed the agency now felt the evidence against Yugoslav forces was overwhelming.

"These unprecedented violations of the most elementary rights of an entire civilian population appear to aim at destroying its collective identity," she said in her speech.

Yugoslav Ambassador Branko Brankovic dismissed many stories of mass expulsions from Kosovo as "Goebbels-style CNN propaganda," and said Belgrade would launch a full inquiry into allegations of atrocities as soon as NATO bombing stopped. Reports from inside Kosovo, meanwhile, point to an escalation of Serb forces' campaign against both the KLA and ethnic Albanian civilians. A KLA commander told the Associated Press by satellite telephone from Kosovo that government forces burned about 10 villages around the southern town of Jablanica near the Albanian border. He said seven KLA fighters and 12 civilians had been killed. "We're here," said the commander, Ramush Hajredina. "But we're having a lot of troubles. There's not enough food for people, and we must go from house to house, village to village, hiding from the Serbs."

The Belgrade authorities' unilateral ceasefire was timed to come ahead of the Orthodox Christian Easter on April 11. Meanwhile, Belgrade will try the three U.S. soldiers captured along the Macedonia-Kosovo border as "international terrorists," Vojislav Seselj, a deputy prime minister of Serbia, told a Russian newspaper.

"We are working to bring them to justice," Seselj, a nationalist radical, told Moskovski Komsomol.

"But since the United States has not declared war against Yugoslavia, these Americans have the status not of prisoners but of international terrorists. We are going to judge them according to Yugoslav law," he said.

The comments came two days after Milan Bozic of the Yugoslav foreign ministry told the U.S. channel ABC that the three soldiers would not be tried but freed when NATO strikes end.

House begins debate

(Continued from page 1)

Taking up two issues which were not specifically mentioned in the policy statement, Deputy Saleh Sha'awtah urged the government to eliminate the one-person, one-vote system in the Elections Law and amend the Press and Publications Law.

The amendment to the Elections Law limiting citizens to one vote was a major factor leading opposition circles, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, to boycott the 1997 parliamentary elections.

Sha'awtah said the Press and Publications Law is among the laws that should be amended to ensure public liberties and freedom of speech in order to enhance democracy in Jordan.

Last week, the Press and Publications Department submitted an exhaustive list of proposed amendments to the law to the Prime Ministry.

Deputy Kamel Omari urged the government not to impose new taxes, work hard to stop inflation and upgrade the capabilities of the Armed Forces. Omari also urged the gov-

ernment not to speed up normalisation of ties with Israel.

"We request that the government not expand its dealing with Jews and refrain from normalisation of ties [with Israel] which harms our future, morals and religion," Omari told lawmakers.

While Jordan's commitment to its peace treaty was reiterated in King Abdullah's letter of designation to Rawabdeh, some politicians believe the Monarch will slow normalisation, at least initially and as Israel heads towards its May 17 elections.

These politicians say putting on the brakes will help garner more credibility on the homefront as well as in the region.

Other demands by deputies who spoke during the first day of debate ranged from improving education, health care and housing, to overhauling the judicial system.

Deputies are expected to continue the debate on Wednesday. Rawabdeh will present his rebuttal before deputies hold the vote of the confidence on either late Wednesday or Thursday.

JORDAN TELEVISION

TEL. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French Focus
19:30 News headlines
19:33 Documents Divers
20:30 N.Y.P.D. Blue
21:15 Divine Pledge
22:00 News in English
22:30 Cover Story

PRAYER TIMES

03:53 Fajr
05:12 (Sunrise) Dhuha
11:37 Dhuhur
15:12 'Asr
18:03 Maghreb
19:23 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swefieh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Lat-

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

ter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Swe-
fieh Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757
The English-Language
Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic
Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the
Department of Meteorology

Scattered showers are expected in the northern and central parts of the Kingdom with winds westerly moderate to active. Temperatures will drop significantly and skies partly cloudy. In Aqaba, it will be partly cloudy, rainy, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman 08/17

Aqaba 15/26
Deserts 07/19
Jordan Valley 12/25

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 20, Aqaba 28.
Humidity readings: Amman
40 per cent, Aqaba 39 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:
Ajloun 03/12
Jerash 07/18
Um Qays 07/16
Madaba 05/16
Petra 06/20
Dead Sea 11/25

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Bassam Karadshieh 4389200
Dr. Khalid Al Masri 5661144
Dr. Salman Daboubt 5812568
Dr. Ramzi Mazzawi 4894788
AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy 5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004
Rukn Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169
IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'ammeh (02)250080

Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360
ZARQA:
Dr. Samir Lawzi (05)989601
Palestine Pharmacy (05)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 4621111 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 4775121
Highway Police 5343402
Traffic office 4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 489467
Amman Municipality Complaints 4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdoli Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 4773111
Radio Jordan 4774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Sp-
cial Surgery 5921199
The Islamic, Abdli 56661317
Hussein Medical Centre 5856856
Luzumia 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 46428186
Al-Khalidi Maternity 46424412
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5607431
Jordan Hospital 5607590
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 56672279
Al-Ahli, Abdli 56641646
Italian, Al-Muashreen 47710113
Al-Bashir 477511126
Army, Marka 489161175
Queen Alia Hospital 5157100
Amal Hospital 5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000
Jerusalem Hospital 4387181

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (05)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (05)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (05)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (05)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Roman Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital (02)7101372, (02)7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital (02)7102831, (02)7102011

Speciality Hospital (02)7103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)2014111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by
Royal Jordanian (RJ) information
department at the Queen Alia
International Airport Tel.
(44)53200-5, where it should
always be verified. Information on
other flights can be supplied on
phone 44 (52700). Information on
Royal Wings flights can be supplied
on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ)
Flights
07:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
08:30 Jeddah (RJ)
08:45 Larnaca (RJ)
09:40 Damascus, Beirut (RJ)
12:00 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
13:45 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
15:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
16:30 London (RJ)
17:00 Paris (RJ)
17:15 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
18:05 Brussels, Berlin (RJ)

18:10 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
18:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
20:50 Istanbul (RJ)
20:55 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
23:15 Beirut (RJ)
23:55 Cairo (RJ)
00:05 Rome (RJ)
00:46 Rome (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

07:55 Dubai (EK)
09:30 Cairo (MS)
10:30 Kuwait (KU)
12:30 Jeddah (SV)
13:10 Tunis (TU)
13:10 Bahrain (GF)
14:00 Kiev (KU)
14:00 Vienna (OS)
15:30 Algiers (AH)
17:35 Beirut (ME)
17:50 Frankfurt (LH)
18:35 Karachi, Abu Dhabi (PK)
23:15 London (BA)
01:25 Athens, Beirut (OA)

DEPARTURES

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
08:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
17:30 Gaza (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
05:40 Larnaca (RJ)
08:45 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

10:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
12:25 London (RJ)
15:30 Istanbul (RJ)
16:00 Rome (RJ)
16:30 Rome (add) (RJ)
19:15 Colombo (RJ)
19:50 Beirut (RJ)
20:05 Cairo (RJ)
20:15 Calcutta, Bangkok (RJ)
20:20 New Delhi (RJ)
20:40 Bombay (RJ)
20:45 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
21:05 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
22:45 Sanaa (RJ)
02:00 Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)

Other Flights

09:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (EK)
10:30 Cairo (MS)
11:45 Kuwait (KU)
14:00 Bahrain (GF)
14:00 Jeddah (SV)
14:10 Tunis (TU)
14:20 Sharjah (AH)
14:50 Vienna (OS)
15:00 Damascus, Kiev (KU)
16:35 Beirut (ME)
20:30 Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK)
23:59 Alexandria (BA)
02:45 Beirut, Athens (OA)
06:10 Frankfurt (LH)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
13:30 Gaza (from Marka Airport) (RW)
16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)



AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Prince Faisal Ben Al Hussein, the Regent, urged concerned authorities to draw up plans that can address traffic problems. He said problems can only be tackled through combined efforts on behalf of all sectors. Speaking during a visit to the Public Security Department (PSD) where he met PSD Director Nasouh Muhieddin, Prince Faisal said Jordan faces a real traffic and road accidents problem which drains the country's human and economic resources. A study on traffic problems in Jordan prepared by the PSD late last year recommended the formulation of a special traffic law and road safety programmes as well as the establishment of a new training institute for traffic personnel. The study noted that in 1997, 577 people were killed in road accidents in Jordan. Prince Faisal listened to a briefing from Muhieddin about the PSD's development and its services. He also toured the department's sections and met senior staff. Later, Prince Faisal visited Army Headquarters and met briefly with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mirai Kaabneh to discuss issues of concern to the Armed Forces (Petra photo)

Qadi announces probe into livestock census

AMMAN (Petra) — Interior Minister Nayef Qadi Tuesday announced the formation of an investigation panel to probe into excesses in the latest livestock census in the Kingdom.

The panel will be headed by Shabib Abu Windi, director of the Parties and Elections Department at the ministry.

The panel is trying to identify those who forged the count results, quadrupling the actual livestock count, and bringing them to trial.

The committee also includes assistant directors of the Public Security and General Intelligence Departments, director general of the Statistics Department, secretary general of the Ministry of Agriculture, secretary general of the Administrative Audit and Inspection Bureau, and a senior Min-

istry of Justice judge.

The committee will meet on Wednesday at the Interior Ministry to discuss its action plan and how to ensure integrity and objectivity of the investigation.

The Ministry of Agriculture conducted a one-day livestock headcount in early March to determine the country's overall herd in order to help alleviate pressure on livestock breeders caused by the current drought.

However, unofficial survey results published in local papers showed six million heads of livestock, double the three million counted in the 1997 census.

The government has said it would offer breeders interest-free loans to enable them to secure fodder for their regular herds, with loans allocated according to herd size. Additional, the Cabinet

has promised to provide free veterinary treatment to all livestock, including offspring. However, the loan scheme is not intended to secure fodder for offspring.

The purpose of the census was to determine the breeding stock, since they require more maintenance. Livestock owners often did not specify in the questionnaire whether the livestock was a breeder animal.

Livestock herds are particularly susceptible to foot and mouth disease under drought conditions.

The Cabinet has allocated JD12 million to support farmers and livestock breeders, through granting them interest-free loans to enable them to overcome difficulties resulting from drought and low rainfall.

Heads of sheep and goats for needy

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — Twenty thousand heads of sheep and goats, sacrificed by Muslim pilgrims in Saudi Arabia late last month in line with religious rituals, have been distributed to needy Jordanian families, officials said on Tuesday.

Officials also denied local news reports that accused some people in charge of distributing the meat of corruption and nepotism and said the gifts went to state-registered beneficiaries.

The shipment began arriving in refrigerated trucks from the neighbouring kingdom on Saturday after the end of the five-day Muslim Eid Al Adha (feast of the sacrifice) to mark the completion of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina.

Meat is sacrificed and

distributed to the needy in line with Islamic law (Sharia).

Officials said Jordan has received an annual quota of 20,000 heads of sheep and goat for years from the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank at the end of Haj (pilgrimage).

"Over 20,000 beneficiaries in twelve governorates in the north and south of the Kingdom received their annual share of the sacrificial goats and sheep," said Zaid Zureiqat, director of the Internal Control Department at the Ministry of Interior.

Distribution guidelines are set by a special government-run board of trustees that takes into consideration the population of each governorate and poor residents registered with the Zakat Fund (Muslim alms giving) and the National Aid Fund.

"The governorates received a minimum of 1,000 heads of sheep to a maximum of 2,500 heads," added Zureiqat.

Usually, each head goes to a single family. But in the Madaba governorate, governor Nassef al Majali decided to spread the governorates share to more families.

"Majali decided to divide and distribute [Madaba's] allocation of 1,000 animals to other needy families not listed in the benefit scheme," Zureiqat said.

"There was nothing wrong with this. It has been done before," Zureiqat added.

He added that Jordan asked the Islamic Development Bank to divide the slaughtered heads of sheep and goats into equal shares and place them in cartons so that 40,000 needy can obtain meat.

Government opens market to imported water

By Saad G. Hattar

AMMAN — The government on Tuesday opened the door to the import of bottled mineral water in a bid to circumvent dire water shortages next summer. But the decision has angered mineral water bottling sector in Jordan.

The Ministry of Industry and Trade Under Secretary Mohammad Halayqah said the government lifted a ban on the purchase of non-Jordanian mineral water and issued import licences to several importers.

Minister of Industry and Trade Mohammad Asfour said the decision was in line with Jordan's economic openness and policy of removing barriers hindering the free flow of trade.

Asfour warned that the Kingdom is heading towards a dire water shortage in light of scarce rainfall this winter, estimated now at 60 per cent below the seasonal average, and said the Trade Ministry did not expect local bottlers to be able to meet demand.

"The local water bottling factories produce nearly 56 million litres, but we expect the market to consume up to 100 million litres this summer," said the minister.

The anticipated shortages are bound to be further aggravated by an expected increase in the number of tourists visiting the Kingdom — especially those hailing from Gulf states, and those who will arrive from around the world to see the annual Jerash Festival of Culture and Arts, slated for July, and the high-profile Ninth Pan-Arab Games, scheduled for September.

But owners of water bottling factories contested the government's decision, saying it will affect their huge investment in this sector, estimated at nearly JD20 million.

"I think the decision was taken in light of pressure exerted by importers' lobbies and merchants," who want to make a fast buck, said Mashhour Haditheh, board chairman of the Ghadeer mineral water factory.

"If the decision is meant to contain possible water shortages, it should be headed, but I think it had other motives," Haditheh told the Jordan Times.

He said that priority should shift towards securing basic tap water for the ordinary citizens rather than flooding the market with mineral water.

"After all, Jordanians cannot afford the price of

bottled water," he said. The price of a 1.5 litre bottle costs JD0.25 per bottle.

Ghadeer Director General Ramzi Haditheh believes that the "mineral water factories could have been listed out as merely a scapegoat to the dire water shortages."

Ramzi stressed that the country's five operational mineral water factories are able to produce up to 125 million litres of bottled water, far exceeding the official consumption estimate.

Furthermore, the factories have built up "strategic storage facilities" to meet an abrupt increase in demand, as happened last summer during a water pollution scandal, he added.

Last summer, the government temporarily lifted a ban on the importation of bottled water, and millions of litres poured into the market.

"It was just a seasonal demand, and now the ministry's warehouses are jammed with bottles of water nearing their expiry dates," argued Ramzi Haditheh.

Jordanian consumers tend to buy local water. In general, they do not have the purchasing power to buy imported mineral

waters, he noted. Haditheh said two other factories are expected to enter market by next summer, hiking to JD20 million the overall investment in this sector.

Sabil Company Director General Thabet Wer warned that the calculated imports of mineral water could "flood" the market and jeopardise local companies.

This would affect the livelihood of scores of Jordanian employees, he noted.

Wer did not rule out that subsidised companies of neighbouring countries would sell on the Jordanian market at lower prices.

Halayqah said his ministry has issued licences for 50 potential investors to open new factories.

None of them, however, has started production.

Halayqah said potential importers have requested to buy large quantities of bottled water from Saudi Arabia, Syria, Bahrain and European countries.

But the influx of bottled water will not affect the unit price tag, he said.

As of April 1, the government set in motion an emergency drought plan that includes water rationing and the exploitation of private wells in anticipation of a hot, dry summer.

Also under the scheme, irrigated farmland will be cut by 30 per cent.

It also envisages hiking the capacity of the Zai Water Treatment Plant from 45 million cubic metres to 90 million in 48 months.

The government has already closed down 600 wells in a bid to regulate the pumping rates of subterranean water, overdrifted by the private sector. The wells used to pump 515 million cubic metres annually, although the safe pumping ceiling should not exceed 275 million.

Jordan consumes over 1,000 million cubic metres per year, while its replenishable water resources are limited to 750 million.

According to official statistics, each Jordanian is entitled to only 105 cubic metres of water per year, compared to 250 for each Israeli citizen and 300 for each French citizen.

So far, water quantities stored behind the Kingdom's six major dams has not exceeded half of their overall capacity of nearly 150 million cubic metres.

The initial estimates put expected financial losses at JD150 million as a result of the looming drought.

The Kremlin Ballet to perform at Jerash

By Dima Hamdan

AMMAN — The Kremlin Ballet Theatre signed an agreement with the Higher Supervisory Committee of the Annual Jerash Festival for Culture and Arts on Monday to participate in this year's festival.

Forty-five members of the renowned Russian ballet company will perform Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake" at the South Theater in Jerash.

"We feel that there isn't enough promotion for refined arts [in Jordan]," said Akram Masarweh, president of the Higher Committee, at a press conference attended by three of the Kremlin Ballet's

directors.

"Swan Lake is a big title [in ballet] and it is important to provide the chance for Jordanians to see a production like this," Masarweh added.

The Moscow-based ballet was founded in 1990 by Andrei Petrov, a choreographer and former member of the Bolshoi Ballet Theatre, one of the oldest Russian ballet companies. The Kremlin Ballet Theatre is considered one of the leading Russian and international ballet companies, and has performed in several countries, including France, Austria, Spain, China and others.

Masarweh also announced that this year the higher

committee will introduce the "Guest Country" concept to the festival. The committee will organise an extensive cultural activities programme featuring a specific country.

He said that this year Egypt will be the first guest country, and Spain will be featured in the year 2000.

The Jordanian-Egyptian cultural programme will be organised in cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry of Culture. The programme will be announced in a press conference this month, attended by Mohammad Gheimeh, the secretary general of the Egyptian Ministry of Culture.

Today is World Health Day

AMMAN (Petra) — In observance of World Health Day (WHD), the Ministry of Health in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth plans to open Jordan's youth centres to senior citizens today to enable them to exercise, according to the head of the ministry's Health Education Department Muna Hamzeh.

Hamzeh said the ministry also plans to deliver lectures at schools on the importance of caring for the elderly at home.

This year's World Health Day has been dedicated to the care of the senior citizens. The Health Ministry plans to present programmes on television and radio to encourage the elderly to acquire hobbies which they can practise at home and to offer counsel and advice to family members on how to treat senior citizens living with them, according to Hamzeh.

On the eve of WHD, Health Minister Ishaq Marqah said that in Jordan, the average life expectancy among the aged has risen. He said 4.8 per cent of the elderly population in the Kingdom are above the age of 60, but the rate is growing owing to favourable social and economic factors, an improvement of health services and a change in lifestyle.

In view of this situation, said the minister, Jordan has to develop facilities to serve the elderly.

WHO Regional Representative Hussein Jallil issued a statement calling on Arab societies to conduct a comprehensive revision of elderly care concepts and of the elderly's role in society to enable them to enjoy a happy and productive life in which they are respected and their contribution to the community is appreciated.

Two Jordanian environmental projects selected for Hanover World Expo 2000

By Susan Resheq

AMMAN — Jordan will be one of 190 countries to participate in the Hanover World Expo 2000 to be held in Germany from June through October 2000.

Two Jordanian environmental projects have been selected to participate in Expo 2000: the Dana Wildlife Reserve Project and the Centre for Restoration and Conservation in Petra.

"The success of Jordanian exhibits around the world in recent years has familiarised the international public with Jordan's natural and cultural heritage, emphasising folklore, antiquities and handicrafts," said chairman of the Jordan National Committee for

the Hanover World Expo. Although Jordan is a developing country, one should keep in mind that it was host to many ancient civilisations and cultures which provided for a rich cultural and trade exchange.

"Layers from the past and present culture constitute an important part of Jordan's modern society: within this framework the Kingdom can be seen as a rich mosaic of humankind, nature, and technology," Abu Hamdan said in a press conference on Monday.

The categories of display will highlight Jordan's attributes in its demography, cultural diversity, archaeology, geography, religion and the role it played in providing vital ancient routes.

Jordan, a land of archaeological layers, showed the earliest forms of human settlements found in and around the area of the Rift Valley.

Being a geographically diverse country, Jordan's terrain consists of rich materials some of which will be used in the construction of the pavilion whose layout will be relevant to the holy sites found in the country.

"The Hanover World Expo will be attended by more than 40 million visitors, and will be covered by more than 30 thousand reporters," Abu Hamdan added.

Street peddlers and legitimate dealers compete on chaotic satellite market

By Munther Murjan

AMMAN — More than 200 companies selling satellite systems in the local market are facing fierce competition in a tight market plagued by door-to-door peddlers.

Most dealers remain divided as to whether or not an association of satellite dealers will help organise the chaotic market that has grown steadily ever since the technology was introduced to the Kingdom ten years ago.

"The market is growing steadily, but faces tough competition between legitimate (licensed and registered) dealerships selling satellites and street peddlers," said Ibrahim Khalili, general manager of Drawish Khalili Sons Co. in

Wihdat.

"It seems that price in general controls the Jordanian market instead of product quality and after sales services," added Khalili, whose firm is among Jordan's leading satellite providers.

"We are basically competing with satellite street peddlers and smugglers," said the manager of a major electronics and electrical appliances company in the capital.

"We pay registration fees and custom duties but we have to operate our business in an environment where some peddlers run their business from tiny shops in old neighbourhoods," he explained. "This enables them to attract the majority of citizens," said Khalili.

In a country of 4.6 million people, where the average annual per capita income is around \$1,400, owning a satellite is still more or less a luxury, although it is becoming more affordable.

The cost of installing a satellite dish that receives Arab and foreign broadcasts has dramatically dropped to as low as JD180 from a height of JD 10,000 a decade ago.

"I used to be a privilege enjoyed by a selected few ten years ago," said Ayman Shamaylih, assistant general manager of Global Business.

But now, dishes of all sizes sit atop many rooftops across the Kingdom — from luxurious villas in Abdoun, to refugee camps and low-

income housing complexes. Traders say loan facilities offered by a handful commercial banks have enabled many less privileged Jordanians to own a satellite receiver.

An unofficial survey conducted recently by a local daily found out that 37.6 per cent of Jordanians owned a satellite system against 53.9 per cent who did not because of financial limitations or for fear the relatively liberal satellite programmes could affect familial and social values in a still largely conservative country.

However, regardless of income, most Jordanians apparently prefer lower-priced products sold by peddlers to the expense of sales service and maintenance

guarantees offered by agents.

"The satellite business in Jordan is growing, despite the satellite street-peddlers and smugglers who give the business a bad name," added Shamaylih.

"Even if an association is created, no one will be committed, neither small dealers nor big ones," said Khalili, who questioned whether such an association would have the legal clout to enforce rules.

"I was a member of the Amman Chamber of Commerce and even that chamber did not have the legal form or ability to enforce regulations and rules on merchants," he said.

"It was more of a government bureau than a body to help develop and protect trade

in the country," he said.

Shamaylih welcomed the idea of an association, but questioned who would benefit from it in a free-market economy.

"I support such an idea," he told the Jordan Times. "But it means that a selected group of individuals will control the market and will decide on the price, the quality and the quantity of goods," he said.

"This totally runs against free market policies."

Nabil Madani, an independent telecommunications engineer, added, "I think that once we have an association, the market will become more organised and peddlers will not have a chance to grow because they will be conducted in the open."

What's Going On

FILMS

- German film "Karbid und Sauerampfer" (with subtitles in English) at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman at 7:30 p.m.
- "Birth of the Renaissance: From Giotto to Massaccio" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Thursday April 8 at 6:30 p.m. (The film will be preceded by a lecture by Dr. Mazin Asfour at 5:30 p.m.).

SWEDISH THEATRE

- Musical performance by Swedish group "Backa Theatre" at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday and Friday April 8-9 at 8:00 p.m.
- "Backa" Theatre Production, "Children and Youth" at Osama Machini Theatre on Friday and Saturday April 8-10 at 6:00 p.m.
- Workshop entitled "Creative Writing for the Theatre" by Lena Verza Findell at Tyche Hotel on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday April 8-10 (10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.).

EXHIBITIONS

- The Seventh Annual American Computer Show at Radisson SAS Hotel, until April 7.
- Book exhibition at the Royal Cultural Centre, until April 8.
- Plastic art exhibition by Hussein Da'ssa entitled "Horizons of the Nineties" at Orient Gallery, Shmeisani, until April 20 (Tel. 56813034).
- Works by Jordanian ceramist Mahmoud Taha at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until May 6. Also showing an exhibition of photographs by Jordanian artist Adnan Sharif entitled "Spring at Darat Al Funun," until May 6.
- Works by Jordanian artist Shereen Audi Kurdi at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Amman, until April 28.
- Display of Iraq Al Amir collection at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation until April 29 (Tel. 5699141/2). (The exhibition includes handicraft, pottery, handwoven fabrics, cushions, handmade paper, and food).
- "Amman... A Meeting Point" by Swedish artists Ann Edholm and Hakan Rhenberg at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists, until April 22.
- Works on paper by Russian artist Yuri Pestov entitled "Al Ferdouse, the Rose Garden" at the Jordanian Plastic Artists Association, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 12 (Tel. 4623297).
- "Colours of the Sufist World" by plastic artist Abdul Hussein Twajil at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Utheina, until April 12.

Fresh violence rages in Borneo, Maluku

JAKARTA (AFP) — Communal violence raged on Tuesday in Indonesian Borneo and in the Maluku islands, with burnings and clashes leaving several dead and at least seven injured, officials said.

In West Kalimantan, groups of armed men were burning houses of Madurese settlers in Sungaiduri, some 41 kilometres south of Singkawang, the main town in Sambas district, a soldier said.

"Singkawang itself is calm although tensions remain high, but in Sungaiduri, there is still burning going on," he said from the Singkawang military coordination post.

On Monday, thousands of Malays and Dayak tribesmen, mostly from surrounding towns and villages, attacked the homes of Madurese settlers on the outskirts of Singkawang.

Violence pitting Madurese against Malays and the indigenous Dayaks in Sambas erupted last month leaving about 200 people dead and a trail of destruction of Madurese properties and farmlands. In another province wracked by violence, clashes broke out in several areas in the Kei Besar and Kei Kecil islands, the head of the Southeast Maluku district, Husein Ahmad Rahayana told AFP.

"Several people have been killed and injured but I do not have the figures yet," Rahayana said by telephone from the district town of Tual.

He said clashes between Muslims and Christians took place in at least four areas — Dian, Dian Pulau, Ohibandar and Tut Ot — on Kei Kecil and two places in Kei Besar — Se'er and Lenggir.

A local community leader in Tual, Amir Aziz, said he had heard that about a dozen people were killed in violence in Kei Kecil and Kei Besar, but the deaths could not be immediately confirmed.

Clashes also broke out in the early hours Tuesday between villagers on Dullah island near Tual, a soldier said.

"Seven injured people had been sent to the general hospital here," said First Sergeant Ateng of the district military command in Tual, adding that five were seriously injured by shot-

guns and two wounded by arrows.

The clash was the latest to hit the district since Muslim-Christian violence erupted in Tual Wednesday. At least 55 people have been killed since in Tual and in other islands in the district.

Maluku military commander, Colonel Karel Ralahalu and the head of the Trikora command overseeing security in Maluku, Major General Amir Sembiring, arrived in Tual for a visit Tuesday, Rahayana said.

In Singkawang, soldiers and police remained on guard throughout the city.

"After yesterday's burnings and attacks, residents are now worried and schools have remained closed," said Priest Silintonga of the Batak Protestant church in Singkawang.

Silintonga said mobs attacked and burned the houses of Madurese settlers on the northern outskirts of the town on Monday, but there were no reports of casualties.

The initial violence Monday was repulsed by security forces who fired warning shots and arrested 20 attackers, then opened fire again when the attackers regrouped and tried to storm the local district police office to free their comrades.

The violence in Borneo has since last month forced some 29,000 Madurese settlers to flee Sambas under military protection, for holding centres in the province's capital of Pontianak, some 145 kilometres south of Singkawang.

Massacres, torchings, decapitation and mutilations as well as ritual cannibalism of Madurese were widespread in March as crudely armed Dayaks and Malays roamed the Sambas countryside hunting down the settlers.

Meanwhile, ethnic violence was also reported in the Riau province in Sumatra where clashes between migrant Bugis from Sulawesi island and local ethnic Chinese, which left one person dead on Sunday, the Media Indonesia daily said.

The victim, a sergeant of the local sub-district military post, was stabbed while trying to halt the clash, the daily said.

Indonesian court convicts 11 military men for kidnapping

JAKARTA (AFP) — A military court on Tuesday found 11 members of Indonesia's elite special Kopassus force guilty of kidnapping nine pro-democracy activists and handing them jail terms of up to 22 months.

Judge Lieutenant Colonel Susanto found the 11 guilty as charged of kidnapping pro-democracy activists during the last months of president Suharto's rule, before he resigned in May 1998.

Susanto sentenced the defendants between a year and 22 months in prison less time served. Most of the defendants have been detained since mid July, 1998.

"The defendants had conspired to deprive nine people of their rights... by picking them up. The way they picked them up was by kidnapping and detaining them. That action was not within their authority," Susanto said.

During the court martial, derided by human rights activists as a "farce" and a "face-saving exercise" by the military to protect senior officers, the prosecution had asked for sentences of between 15 to 26 months.

Susanto handed the most senior officer charged, Major Bambang Kristiono, a 22 month sentence and fired him from the

military.

Captains Multhazar, Nugroho Sulistyono Budi, Yulius Stefanus, and Untung Budiarto received 18-month terms and dismissals.

Captains Dadang Indrayuda, Djoko Budiotomo, and Fauka Nur Farid received 14-month sentences, but were allowed to stay in the military.

One-year sentences went to Sergeant Major Sunaryo, First Sergeant Sigit Sugiono, and First Sergeant Sukadi, who were also all allowed to keep their jobs.

Kristiono and all the captains immediately said they would appeal while the others said they wanted time "to think it over."

"I highly respect the judge's decision, however with the additional verdict (of dismissal) — we, some of Kopassus' finest officers, have to appeal," said Kristiono, speaking also on behalf of the other four dismissed from the military.

All eleven had been under house arrest since March 16 following the end of their maximum detention period.

The nine activists were the only ones to resurface of the 23 who went missing early last year in the last months of the Suharto regime.

One was later found dead and the 13 others are still missing.



East Timorese separatist leader Xanana Gusmao speaks to journalists during a press conference at his detention house in Jakarta March 2. Gusmao ordered, on April 5, all East Timorese to resume their war against Indonesian troops after learning that pro-Indonesian militia had killed 17 East Timorese (AFP photo)

Indonesia denies stirring up trouble in Timor

JAKARTA (AP) — The Indonesian government denied on Tuesday that it was fomenting unrest in East Timor even as a separatist rebel leader challenged Jakarta to a bloody showdown.

Guerrilla leader Jose Alexandre Gusmao dared Indonesia to flood East Timor with troops, saying his forces were ready to confront them no matter how great their numbers.

Yet rebel violence dwindled years ago and the fighters are only able to operate from remote mountain camps.

Gusmao matched his challenge with an appeal to the United Nations to swiftly dispatch a peacekeeping force to his homeland before it is engulfed in violence.

The deterioration in peace talks came amid fighting between supporters and opponents of independence in the former Portuguese colony that left up to four people dead.

About 1,500 terrified residents took refuge at a Roman Catholic church in the town of Liquisa after a shooting

Monday that separatist activists said was provoked by military-backed civilian militias.

At least 20 people, including one Indonesian soldier, were injured in another clash in Liquisa on Tuesday, local health workers said. Residents said two people were killed, but the military said it could not confirm the report.

Ghaffar Fadyl, a spokesman for the Indonesian foreign ministry, said his government would study Gusmao's accusations and that the military was not involved in factional fighting in the land that it invaded in 1975.

"The Indonesian soldiers in East Timor are there to safeguard and maintain security in the region," Fadyl said.

There are at least 10,000 troops in East Timor.

The heightened tensions could jeopardise a U.N.-supervised ballot in July among East Timor's 800,000 people on whether to become an autonomous state within Indonesia or to break away completely.

Indonesia, which embarked

on a transition to democracy after the May ouster of authoritarian President Suharto, said earlier this year that it was willing to relinquish control of East Timor.

If the East Timorese turn down autonomy in the vote, government officials have said, then they are entitled to independence. The poor, half-island territory has long endured human rights abuses and rebel fighting.

In February, guards shifted Gusmao from a Jakarta jail to more comfortable detention in a state-owned house so he could assist in negotiations on East Timor, Indonesia's 27th province.

But his words of peace have given way to harsh rhetoric. On Monday, he ordered separatist fighters to resume attacks on the Indonesian military, saying it had armed and trained anti-independence militias in a bid to scuttle the U.N. ballot through violence and intimidation.

On Tuesday, he urged Indonesia to pull troops out of other troubled regions where it has been trying to quell ethnic, religious and separatist

unrest and send them to East Timor for a battle.

"Please withdraw all the troops in Ambon, Kalimantan, Irian, Aceh and send them to East Timor. We are ready to face them," Johnson Pandjaitan, a lawyer for Gusmao, quoted the rebel as saying.

Gusmao's Bravado has alarmed Australia, the United States and other foreign governments which have been pushing for peace. But his estimated 700 rebels, who carry out hit-and-run raids, aren't powerful enough to conduct a major battle with Indonesian troops.

Although Gusmao is revered by many East Timorese, it is not clear how much control he has over daily rebel operations. Also, he has come under increasing pressure from some separatist circles who perceived his earlier peace overtures as too soft on Indonesia.

"Our political goodwill and our commitment to peace have been perceived as our weakest point," Gusmao said in a statement on Monday.

'K. Rouge must be held to account'

PHNOM PENH (R) — A U.S. Senator said on Tuesday it was important Cambodia ensures accountability for crimes committed during the 1970s Khmer Rouge rule but said aid should not be used to pressure the government on a trial.

John Kerry, a member of the Senate Commerce and Foreign Relations Committee, said he was to meet Prime Minister Hun Sen later on Tuesday when he would also discuss the international community's hopes for stability in Cambodia.

"I would like to communicate my concerns about the importance of the accountability for the 1970s Khmer Rouge excesses," Kerry told reporters

soon after arriving in Phnom Penh.

The United Nations has proposed setting up an international tribunal to try Khmer Rouge leaders for genocide and crimes against humanity during their 1975-79 rule when an estimated 1.7 million people were killed.

The United States backs the proposal but the Phnom Penh government has insisted a trial must be in Cambodia under Cambodian law, even though U.N. legal experts and Cambodian lawyers say the local judicial system is not up to the task.

Late last month U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell warned Hun

Sen that U.S. aid would be at risk if a trial of Khmer Rouge leaders did not measure up to international standards.

But Kerry, a Democrat from Massachusetts, said he did not believe aid should be directly linked to the issue of a Khmer Rouge trial.

"It's premature, in my judgement, to make a strict formalised equation of all aid to one or two particular aims," he said.

"We, all of us, will take into account progress but if you have a very strict automatic linkage of humanitarian assistance to an overly strict regime of what you're expecting, that could conceivably become

counterproductive," he said.

The United States suspended all but humanitarian aid to Cambodia in 1997 after then First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh was ousted by his junior coalition partner and co-premier, Hun Sen.

Washington gave Cambodia \$35 million in aid in the year before Hun Sen's coup.

Hun Sen's ruling party narrowly won an election in July last year and Ranariddh later agreed to join Hun Sen in a new coalition.

Kerry said there were still concerns about cooperation between the coalition partners though he said progress had been made in recent months.

Less support for casual sex, abortion mark college freshmen

WASHINGTON (AP) — Wendy Shalit's new book is raising eyebrows for the shocking message it promotes: sexual modesty.

But the 23-year-old writer, who lashes out against random college hookups and sexual encounters, may not be a generational anomaly. A comprehensive survey of college freshmen — taken annually since 1966 — finds record low support for casual sex among the 1998 entering class.

That's not the only area where young adults are taking decidedly different turns on issues than previous generations of college students. On law and order, abortion and even their goals in life, the differences are sometimes wide.

"Their parents are the

ones who sort of believed in this liberation through promiscuity and experience," said Shalit, whose book, "A Return to Modesty: Discovering the Lost Virtue," came out in January. But some kids today are "embracing the codes of conduct that their own parents rejected." Not a surprise to some college students, who agree that young adults are looking for a return to religious or more traditional moral values after the legacy left by the decadent 1960s and the baby boomers.

"We have members who are more conservative than their parents," says Chris Gillott, chairman of Pennsylvania State University's Young Americans for Freedom. Gillott says some of his peers go home and "come

out of the conservative closet" to their families, igniting heated discussions.

A few examples: —only 40 per cent of freshmen agree that it's OK for two people who like each other to have sex, even if they have only known each other a short while. That's down from 42 per cent in 1997, and an all-time high of 52 per cent in 1987, according to the study by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles.

—In 1970, 56 per cent of the freshmen surveyed showed strong opposition to capital punishment. By 1998, less than a quarter of them believed the death penalty should be abolished.

Nearly 73 per cent of freshmen said there is too much concern for criminals — an almost 50 per cent increase since the early 1970s when only about half of those surveyed felt that way.

—Only half of this year's freshmen backed efforts to keep abortion legal — a record low figure after six years on the decline. Support for laws protecting abortion peaked in 1990 at 65 per cent.

Even views on the grand scheme of things can shift considerably in a few generations. Nearly three-quarters of the class of 2002 consider being well-off financially among their highest objectives.

Their parents had different goals when they were freshmen. In the late

NEWS IN BRIEF

Malaysia, Russia agree to expand defence ties

KUALA LUMPUR (R) — Malaysia and Russia agreed on Tuesday to strengthen defence cooperation including military training and joint production of equipment. The defence ministry said senior officials from the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding reaffirming Malaysia's desire to develop friendly relations with Russia. "The scope of cooperation involves military training, defence technology and defence industry," Malaysia's defence ministry said in a statement. The memorandum was signed by Hashim Meon, secretary-general of Malaysia's defence ministry, and Nikolai Mikharov, visiting first deputy defence minister. The statement said the military training would include training and exchange of defence personnel. Both countries will work together in research and development and in joint production, repair and maintenance of defence equipment, it said without elaborating. A joint commission has been set up to oversee activities. The ministry said Malaysia already had military ties with the Russian air force, which is training Malaysian air force personnel on the use of MiG-29 aircraft. A joint venture company, aerospace technology systems Corp SDN BHD, was established in 1995 to provide support for Malaysia's MiG-29 aircraft, it said.

Scores of Indonesian women rally for peace

JAKARTA (AFP) — Some 100 women held a peace rally in central Jakarta Tuesday, calling for an end to the violence raging around the country, as well as a more prominent role for women in solving the nation's problems. The protesters, many dressed in black, urged their fellow women to unite to bring peace back to the country, which has been rocked in the past year by violent sectarian and communal clashes. "Stop Violence!" "Unite Indonesian Women for Peace!" and "Disband the militia in East Timor," read some of the placards brandished at a busy city roundabout. They also demanded that the government involve women in all its efforts toward reconciliation, saying little success would be achieved without their participation. The rally was spearheaded by noted Indonesian women activists, and included the wife of Abdurrahman "Gus Dur" Wahid, a presidential hopeful and chairman of the 30-million strong Nahdlatul Ulama Muslim organisation. The group also urged women in the country and the troubled province of East Timor to put aside the interests of their own groups and religions and work for the common interest of peace.

TV, radio services hit as Indian media workers strike

NEW DELHI (AFP) — More than 23,000 workers of India's state-run radio and television networks began an indefinite strike pay on Tuesday, affecting services across the country. The strikers claimed the protest was "total" and had affected several news bulletins and other programmes in both networks. United News of India reported. Dipak Dholakia, secretary of a forum of television and radio employees, said many programmes had been "truncated." The protesters include newsreaders, administrative staff, artists, stenographers and drivers who want salaries upgraded to the level of engineers, producers and directors.

Indian government orders release of 300 jailed separatists

ANANDPUR SAHIB, India (AP) — At least 300 Sikh separatists jailed since the 1980s will be released to mark the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Sikh religious brotherhood, the state government of Punjab announced Tuesday. Prakash Singh Badal, the Punjab state chief minister, told reporters the government will review the cases of nearly 10,000 Sikhs who were jailed during the separatist uprising that was crushed in the early 1990s. The insurrection escalated in 1984 after the Indian army raided the Sikhs' holiest shrine, the Golden Temple in Amritsar, to flush out separatist leaders hiding there. Indira Gandhi, the prime minister at the time, was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards in retaliation. On Tuesday, Badal visited Anandpur Sahib, a town 250 kilometres south of Amritsar, to oversee preparations for the week-long anniversary celebrations scheduled to begin later this week. Badal's governing Akali Dal was divided into rival groups of moderates and radicals for control of the celebrations. The Sikh religion was founded by Guru Nanak in 1469, combining parts of Hinduism and Islam. Two hundred years later, Guru Gobind Singh, 10th in the line of teachers, founded the Khalsa, or Sikh brotherhood, with military overtones to stop persecution of its followers. As part of rules of the Khalsa, Sikhs men wear their hair long and cover it with a turban, and are required to carry a sword or dagger.

World News

Congress asked to expand crime laws

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bill Clinton is asking Congress to expand federal hate crime laws to include offences based on sexual orientation.

The president also is directing that colleges be required to report hate crimes annually and endorse a public-private partnership designed to educate middle school students against intolerance.

The partnership will involve AT-and-T, Court TV, Cable in the Classroom, the National Middle Schools Association and the Anti-Defamation League working with the justice and education departments to develop curricula to combat intolerance.

Clinton was announcing the initiatives Tuesday with religious, education and law enforcement leaders at a Roosevelt Room ceremony, White House officials said.

"The president is signing this directive to increase public awareness and information about hate crimes among young people and doing whatever he can in his power to advance this cause while we wait for Congress to act," said Bruce Reed, the White House director of public policy.

The idea for the middle schools programme grew out of a White House conference on hate crimes that generated a lot of anecdotal information about ethnic and racial insensitivities among school children.

The aim, said a White House official who spoke on condition of anonymity, is to "nip intolerance in the bud" by educating children about its consequences.

In addition, Clinton will direct the justice and education departments to require that college campuses provide specific information about hate crimes in the campus crime statistics they provide to law enforcement each year.

The information will be used to generate hard data on how violent crimes relate to intolerance on college campuses, the official said.

Clinton's hate crimes legislation died in committee last year in the House and Senate. The initiative was reintroduced last month by a bipartisan group of lawmakers.

Under the bill, current law would be expanded so the justice department could prosecute crimes based on a person's sex, sexual orientation or disability. Now, the statute only covers crimes based on race, colour, religion or national origin.

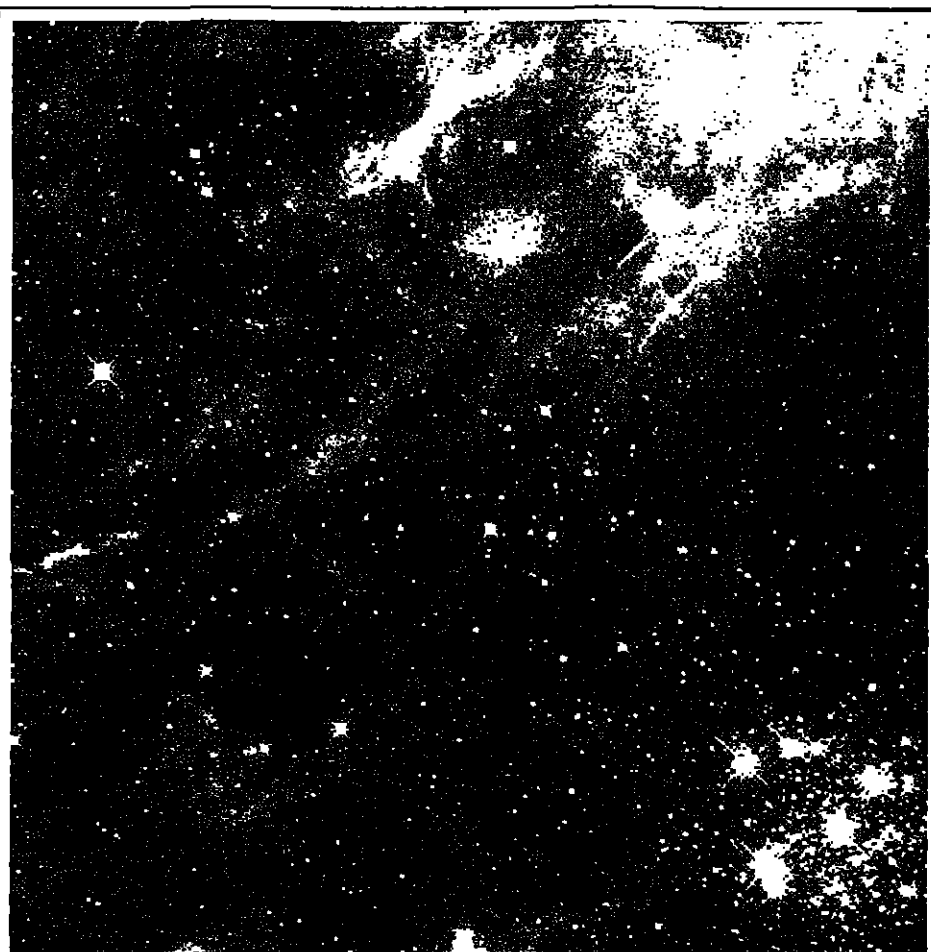
The bill would also make federal prosecution of hate crimes easier. Current law limits prosecution to situations where the victim is targeted for engaging in certain federally protected activities, such as serving on a jury, voting or attending public school.

More than 40 states have hate crimes laws but only 21 cover sexual orientation, 22 cover gender and 21 cover disability.

Sponsors hope that outrage over recent highly publicised killings will fuel support for the measure this year.

One of two young men charged in the Wyoming slaying of gay college student Matthew Shepard pleaded guilty Monday. He was sentenced to two consecutive life terms in prison.

Two men have been charged with beating to death a gay textile worker, Billy Jack Gaither, in Alabama earlier this year and burning his body on a pile of tires.



This image taken by the Hubble Space Telescope released by NASA on April 1, 1999, shows a cluster of massive stars, known as Hodge 301, seen in the lower right hand corner of this image. Hodge 301 is inside the Tarantula Nebula in our nearest galactic neighbour, the Large Magellanic Cloud. Many of the stars in Hodge 301 are so old that they have exploded as supernovae. These exploded stars are blasting material out into the surrounding region at speeds of almost 300 miles per second. This high speed ejecta is ploughing into the surrounding Tarantula Nebula, shocking and pressing the gas into a multitude of sheets and filaments, seen in the upper left portion of the picture. Also present near the centre of the image are small, dense gas globules and dust columns where new stars are being formed today, as part of the overall ongoing star formation throughout the Tarantula region (AFP photo)

Pinsky gets unprecedented third term as poet laureate

WASHINGTON (AP) — The nation's ninth poet laureate is getting a third, unprecedented year on the job.

Robert Pinsky, who teaches creative writing at Boston University, doesn't have the official wine allowance that Britain's poet laureate has been entitled to ever since Shakespeare's drinking friend, Ben Jonson, took the job in 1616.

"I've heard that they're going to abolish all that Medieval nonsense, give him a one-year term like we have and put him on a salary," Pinsky said Monday about the British poet laureate, who serves for life.

Ted Hughes, Britain's last poet laureate, died last year. Pinsky, 58, is the ninth American laureate since Congress created the title in 1985. He was reappointed to a third year Monday by

librarian of Congress James H. Billington.

Pinsky has been especially active, appearing in public and on TV, emphasising poetry as part of life — even poems composed with words on refrigerator magnets.

He will preside Wednesday at two readings at the library, one for youngsters of school age and one for prominent Washingtonians.

"We're hoping to have Eleanor Holmes Norton, the district's representative in Congress and William S. Cohen, the defence secretary, to read their favourites," Pinsky said.

Cohen is a novelist, but Pinsky said he didn't know if the defence secretary had written any poetry.

Pinsky has been pushing a project in which President Bill Clinton, other prominent people and ordinary Americans are asked to read

their favourite poems aloud. About 1,000 audio and 200 video recordings will be made. They will be deposited in the Library of Congress as a record of how Americans felt about poetry at the turn of the millennium.

Next April, Pinsky will take a major part in a conference on "Poetry and the American People," celebrating the library's 200th anniversary.

Pinsky gets an assistant, an office at the library and \$35,000 a year. His allowance comes from privately collected money, as does \$20,000 each for three special consultants he will have for the first time this year.

The consultants will be Rita Dove, a former poet laureate, and Louise Glück and W.S. Merwin, both also well known as poets.

Scottish elections campaigning begins

EDINBURGH (AFP) — Campaigning kicked off Tuesday for elections to Scotland's first autonomous parliament in three centuries, with the ruling British Labour party buoyed by the latest opinion polls.

The May 6 contest is a two-horse race between Prime Minister Tony Blair's Labour and the pro-independence Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP), which sees the regional assembly as a stepping-stone to secession from Britain.

But recent surveys have shown the SNP's support slipping away, raising hopes in London that Labour can retain the reins of power in the northern British province, even if it falls short of an overall majority.

In that event, the centrist Liberal Democrats are seen as the most likely coalition partners.

Blair, who is paying a two-day visit to Scotland at the end of this week, was encouraged by a poll for

Scotland on Sunday which found he was the Scottish Labour party's best electoral asset.

The poll was the fourth in three weeks to put Labour in the lead.

In terms of seats in the 129-member parliament, Labour emerges comfortably as the largest party with 60 seats in the poll — compared to 41 for the SNP — but five short of an overall majority.

The conservative London broadsheet, the Daily Telegraph, commented: "The apparently inexorable decline in support for the SNP surely signals that there is no great enthusiasm for taking Scotland out of the United Kingdom."

"We must, however, be cautious about the outcome. The campaign will run for four full weeks and roughly a quarter of voters have still to make up their minds."

The SNP, which has pledged to hold a referendum on independence within three years if it wins power, remains confident in

the secessionist aspirations of Scots.

It is not alone. According to the left-leaning Independent, the British royal family is considering plans to give up some of its powers in return for the nationalists agreeing to allow the monarchy to survive in an independent Scotland.

Royal sources quoted by the daily said Queen Elizabeth II was "very worried" about the prospect of an advance by the SNP, which the royals fear could win power at the next elections in 2003.

Labour's campaign will try to raise voter fears about the SNP's plan to divorce Scotland from Britain.

The nationalists are seeking to exploit Blair's lurch to the right by appealing to the groundswell of leftwing opinion in Scotland.

Labour has pledged to make a one-percentage-point cut in income tax across Britain, but the SNP has said it will not implement this in Scotland and

invest the money instead in public services.

And its leader, Alex Salmond, stuck his neck out by condemning the NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia.

The Scottish Conservatives, who were wiped out north of the border at the last general election in May 1997, are seeking to rebuild their support in Scotland. The May 6 poll is the result of Labour's election pledge to devolve power to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, although the broad levers of defence and foreign policy will remain at Westminster.

Elections will be held on the same day in Wales for a regional assembly with limited autonomy.

In Scotland's case, the new administration will have the power to raise or lower income tax within a margin of three per cent of the British rate.

It will have its own budget to carve up spending for health, education and other areas.

Giuliani raising 'carpetbagger' issue against Mrs. Clinton

ALBANY, NEW YORK (AP) — In February, New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani said he would not raise the "carpetbagger" issue against Hillary Rodham Clinton in their possible Senate race.

Now he has begun doing just that. The strategy surfaced last week when the mayor's campaign committee unveiled its "Hillaryno.Com" Computer Web Site.

"Born in Illinois and carried to power in Arkansas, with no connection of any kind to New York, Hillary has set her sights on the New York Senate seat," the Web Site said.

A day after the web site went public, Giuliani said: "I didn't say I wouldn't raise it as an issue. What I said was that from my point of view that was not something critical."

In fact, during an appear-

ance Feb. 21 on CNN's "late edition," the mayor was asked about the "carpetbagger" issue and answered: "That's certainly not an issue that I would raise personally."

Next year's race for the Senate seat being vacated by Democrat Daniel Patrick Moynihan could pit the Republican mayor against the first lady, Mrs. Clinton has not said whether she will run. Giuliani hasn't disclosed his intentions either.

Former mayor Ed Koch, a Democrat, said Monday that Giuliani "is like a serpent with forked tongue" for using the carpetbagger issue.

"One could argue that he is trying to scare her out" of the race, said Harold Ickes, a top adviser to Mrs. Clinton. "That's primarily the reason why you would go negative this early."

Giuliani defended his strategy shift last week, saying that people around the state kept mentioning Mrs. Clinton's lack of New York roots to him.

"Being the mayor of New York City and just listening to the views of New York City, I didn't quite understand a month, a month and a half ago, but this is a major issue," he said.

Asked if it was fair, he said: "Come on, it's politics. She presents us with an opportunity and we take advantage of it and then that's not fair? I mean it is fair that she comes to New York and raises lots of money?"

"In terms of practical politics, this is an intelligent thing to do," he said.

Some independent polls have suggested Mrs. Clinton could be vulnerable to the carpetbagger attack. A statewide poll from early February found that 46 per cent of registered voters surveyed said they would be

less likely to vote for a non-New Yorker. Forty-nine per cent said it would make no difference.

However, the carpetbagger issue has not stopped others. The Senate seat Mrs. Clinton and Giuliani are eyeing was won in 1964 by Robert Kennedy and in 1970 by the Conservative Party's James Buckley. Kennedy had been a Massachusetts resident. Buckley hailed from Connecticut.

In fact, during Kennedy's 1964 senate campaign, a student wrote in his college newspaper that it was "truly ridiculous" that people might not support Kennedy because of the carpetbagger issue.

"Let us hope that cosmopolitan New Yorkers can rise above the ridiculous, timeworn provincial attitude that has so disunited our nation," Manhattan College student Rudolph Giuliani wrote.

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From standoff to solution

AFTER TWO weeks of intense warfare over Kosovo, the standoff between NATO and Belgrade continues with no end in sight. NATO postures that, it is not about to lose its war with a relatively small power, and has augmented its aerial strikes, introducing new weapons to the war theatre including Apache helicopters to attack Serbian ground forces operating in Kosovo. As the Serbs remain defiant, continuing columns of Kosovar refugees run for their lives.

Voices in some NATO countries calling for the deployment of NATO ground forces grow a bit louder, while public opinion in some of these countries is tilting in favour of such a military intervention.

Committing ground forces may, however, prolong the fighting rather than end it. Such an escalation would not offer immediate relief to the refugees.

The international community is thus faced with only one alternative to the deadlock, encouraging the warring sides to accept international intervention possibly by the U.N. Security Council. U.N. intervention could be two-phased. First the insistence on an immediate cease-fire, the swift withdrawal of Serb forces from Kosovo, the immediate return of the refugees and finally the deployment of an effective peacekeeping force to maintain law and order and provide security to the repatriated refugees.

The second phase would address the political solution to the conflict, whereby the Security Council would draw its parameters based on the Rambouillet formula which the two sides came very close to accepting, and relevant international law including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Belgrade is a party. The political settlement would also entail bringing to justice all those who committed crimes against humanity, whoever they are. It is through the application of international humanitarian law and international human rights that the conflicts in the Balkan region can be brought to a just and permanent resolution.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Mahmoud Rimawi said no international decision bans the export of weapons to Syria as the country is not in a state of war against any party. Therefore, said Rimawi, U.S. moves to punish three Russian companies accused of supplying weapons to Damascus is illogical. Syrian territory has been occupied by Israel since 1967, and there is a broad military cooperation between Tel Aviv and Ankara in conjunction with Washington, said the writer. Moreover, he added, the U.S. administration is unable to force Israel to resume the peace process, deadlocked for three years. Despite that, strategic cooperation still continues to ensure the Jewish state's occupation of Golan and other Arab territory. Perhaps the U.S. action aims at minimising the Russian role in the peace process, speculated Rimawi. Syria is not like Serbia; Damascus is using a defence policy against Israel and adheres to peace as a strategic option, he concluded.

Al Dostour's Mazen Saket commented on the performance of Jordanian political parties, saying that they have achieved practically nothing. Centrist parties have tried in the past to take a leading role, but this failed for many reasons, Saket said. However, many figures from these parties managed to gain leading positions in the government's executive and legislative institutions, and were satisfied with this, freezing their parties' roles, added the writer. Opposition parties used slogans against normalisation with Israel instead of tackling society's problems and the reality of the political situation, he said, and they became more confident that they legitimately represent all kinds of opposition in discussions with the government. However, said Rimawi, the reality is different, and he expressed hope that the parties will get out of their "crisis."

Washington Watch

Democracy and debate

Dr. James J. Zogby

IN A democracy, most major policy issues, both foreign and domestic, are subjected to intense public debate. Through this political process, policy is influenced and shaped. This can be one of democracy's greatest strengths.

But, even in a democracy, it is difficult to have a free and open debate about some issues. While this problem has, for years, haunted Arab Americans and supporters of Palestinian rights, I was reminded of it last week when the U.S. Major League baseball team, the Baltimore Orioles, travelled to Havana to play against the Cuban national team. In the midst of the game, it all seemed so natural. Cuba is a small poor country only 90 miles from the United States. They play baseball; we play baseball. And yet, despite this small gesture, those who support expanding normalisation with Cuba and ending the decades old U.S. embargo of that country should not get their hopes up.

Especially in the year before a presidential election, it will be quite difficult to entertain any serious political debate about U.S.-Cuban policy.

The reason for this is quite simple. There is a substantial and well-organised block of anti-Castro Cuban Americans concentrated in the state of Florida.

Their numbers are large and they vote. Any presidential candidate hoping to win that state's support in the 2000 election will not want to alienate Cuban Americans.

I've written before about my experiences at the 1988 Democratic Convention where I helped to lead the effort to have a public debate on Palestinian rights. I still recall the near hysteria of the party leaders who insisted that no debate take place. Two very prominent leaders actually told me that if I persisted in my efforts "you will be responsible for the destruction of this party."

That was how extreme their reaction was. Their fears were prompted by their belief that if Democrats had even a temperate and rational debate on the Palestinian question, the powerful bloc of Jewish American voters concentrated in New York and a few other key states would be so infuriated that Democrats would lose elections in that state thereby threatening the party's viability.

The reaction of most party leaders to Cuba is about the same. In 1994, while I was serving on the Resolutions Committee of the Democratic Party, I was approached by Jesse Jackson, Jr.

(now a Congressman from Illinois) who asked me if I would support a resolution he would introduce calling for an end to the U.S. embargo of Cuba.

Once again, as was the case of our 1988 effort on behalf of Palestinian rights, the reaction was neither civil nor rational. The merits or logic of our case was not to be considered. Instead some party leaders reminded us, in an emotional plea, that Republicans currently get the vast majority of Cuban American votes. In order to be competitive in state-wide Florida elections, Democrats need to increase their share of Cuban American voters. Passing this resolution, we were told, would virtually end the chances for a Democrat to win an election in that state.

I must point out that this inability to rationally discuss a controversial issue is not limited to the Democratic Party. In 1992, a lone Arab American member of the Republican National Committee attempted to pass a resolution at his party's annual meeting that simply expressed the Republican Party's support of the effort by then President George Bush and Secretary of State James Baker to achieve a resolution of the Middle East conflict based on the formula

of "land for peace." The resolution not only failed to pass, it received virtually no support at all, and this from Bush's own party! Domestic issues are not exempt from this phenomenon of politics and fear silencing debate. The treatment of the question of abortion provides a clear example.

In 1992, Republicans booed speakers at their national convention who even made oblique references to the need to be tolerant of different views on abortion. Those who support a more open political discussion within the Republican Party call for the party to have a "big tent," by which they mean that the party ought to be big enough to include some divergent views under its tent.

Supporters of this call for tolerance within the Republican Party have so far been unsuccessful.

If the Republican Party has shown such intolerance for supporters of abortion, Democrats have been as intolerant of those who oppose abortion.

Again, in 1992, two women members of the Democratic Party's platform committee attempted to introduce a rather modest amendment that would have placed some limits on abortion rights. I will never forget the cold hostility with which these women were greeted. Their motion was never even discussed. Later, that same year, at the national party convention, the popular governor of Pennsylvania was denied the opportunity to speak at the event.

In each instance noted above and in the case of a host of other issues as well, the fear of debate is based on the fear of alienating specific pressure groups. It represents the weak underside of democracy. This flaw occurs in the process when, on any issue, there can be no free exchange of ideas because there exists an asymmetry in power between the groups that represent different points of view.

The result is not only a stifling of discussion, but a distortion of the democratic process and, in all cases, bad policy. The politics that emerge from this flawed process are akin to dogmatic rigidity and are antithetical to real democracy. It is an abuse of power where one group, or the fear of some to confront that group, results in the silencing of another group. This is not democracy, it is fundamentalism, and it should be opposed whenever it manifests itself.



Parallels between Kosovo and Palestine missed by U.S. media

By George S. Hishmeh

WASHINGTON — Generally speaking, the point has been shockingly and disappointingly missed here: the sordid events surrounding Kosovo, the Yugoslav province nowadays undergoing "ethnic cleansing," is a rare case of history repeating itself.

Over 50 years ago, the majority of Palestinians, nearly one million strong, were dispossessed in similar fashion of their homeland at the hands of European Jewry with the support of the same powers now leading the air campaign to stop the genocidal war launched by Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.

More surprisingly, most of the American reporting from the Middle East failed to see the analogy between the misfortunes of the Kosovars and the Palestinians, who only last month have been assured (by the Europeans but not the Americans) of their right to self-determination.

Consequently most of the American reporting highlighted that the Arabs were "divided" on Kosovo because of their conflicting political views, or at best had "mixed reactions" over the air strikes by the U.S.-led NATO forces; in effect, betraying a sense of American disappointment that there were no Arabs (or Muslims) cheering the defence of their co-religionists in the rapidly disintegrating Yugoslav province.

The interpretation of the Arab view was usually explained in black and white terms. The few countries who urged the NATO onslaught were described as "allies" of the key Western powers and hoped, contrary to the official allied view, that the military action would continue until an independent state could be established in Kosovo. The remaining Arab states, however, were said to have viewed the admittedly ineffective bombing as a replay of what Iraq has been enduring along with the crippling U.N.-imposed sanctions.

Jordan, it was prominently pointed out, adopted the strongest official Arab condemnation of Serb actions in Kosovo — King Abdullah recalled his envoy from Belgrade in protest.

It is amazing that there should have been an expectation here for a monolithic Arab point of view on Kosovo as if President Bill Clinton himself has uncritical support of his policy at home. Far from it.

Arab concerns, be they of the man in the street or the foreign ministry official, stem from their horrid experiences in Palestine and Iraq, and their continued banking on the moral weight of the United Nations.

Scenes of Serbian soldiers herding ethnic Albanians conjures images of Palestinians crossing the Allenby Bridge into Jordan and thereby resentment of any partition scheme (as rumoured at present) or permanent refugee camps in the neighbouring states in the manner of the Palestinians.

Similarly, the NATO air strikes and the possibility of deploying ground forces in Kosovo is seen in Arab eyes as a harbinger of what may be in store for the regime of Iraq's Saddam Hussein should this become more desirable.

More significantly, the Arab World in general is not pleased that the United Nations has been denied a role in the search for a settlement of the Yugoslav imbroglio, a development that must be unsettling for the Palestinian who are hoping for full implementation of all U.N. resolutions covering their conflict with Israel and the creation of a Palestinian state.

In contrast, the reporting on the Israeli reaction, generally described as ambivalent, has been more forthright. "If a Jewish dimension comes up in this, it calls for sympathy for (the Serbs)," Yehoshua Porath, a retired history professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem was quoted as saying.

Lee Hockstader of The Washington Post was the exception to the rule in his April 1 analysis:

"Some Israelis who have examined the NATO action in Kosovo think it can only mean trouble for Israel itself in the not-too-distant future. To these observers, who tend to be on the right-wing of public opinion, the plight of the Kosovo Albanians bears just enough resemblance to that of the Palestinians, or Israel's own

'What if some future Israeli government refuses to sign a peace accord with the Palestinians, as Milosevic's Serbia refused... to some Israelis a dangerous precedent is being set'

million-strong Arab minority, to be unsettling.

"Like Israeli Arabs, the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo are a Muslim minority in a sovereign state. Like the Palestinians they aspire to create an independent stand on land they regard as their birthright. What if some future Israeli government refuses to sign a peace accord with the Palestinians, as Milosevic's Serbia refused to sign one with the Kosovo Albanians? The parallels may seem superficial, but to some Israelis a dangerous precedent is being set."

The possibility in the future of economic sanctions, if not bombing, against Israel should it fail to come to terms with the Palestinians, albeit farfetched at present, has also not escaped some Israelis.

As in the case with Iraq, the air strikes over Yugoslavia are unlikely to bring back Milosevic to the negotiating table and this may still present the U.N. or the Organisation of Islamic Countries whose Contact Group meets today in Geneva an opportunity to bring about a new initiative to stop the unfortunate blood-letting.

Letters to the editor

*Marry me today,
 divorce me tomorrow*

I WOULD like to salute the efforts and taste of those in Jordan Television for many reasons, especially for not continuing to present the series "The Bold and the Beautiful." It is a waste of time, it has no reasonable aim, and no moral message can be gleaned from it. It would be more befitting to call it Marry Me Today, Divorce Me Tomorrow, because it is certainly not about the sanctity of love.

Yes I used to watch it, and yes I do watch it sometimes. The thing about this soap is that once you watch an episode, you just want to see what will happen next. But unfortunately the end is never near.

Thank God for those who protested this series in the first place and to Jordan Television for responding.

Rula Samain Naffa
 Amman

What about charity

AT A time when thousands of mostly Muslim Kosovars have been expelled from their towns and turned into homeless refugees with no identity, owning nothing but the clothes on their backs, we ask ourselves: where are Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE Oman and other oil-rich Gulf States which could, if they wanted to, help these refugees? Why haven't these countries sent planes full of medicine, food, tents, etc. to Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania? Why don't they offer refugees the opportunity to be airlifted to their countries, which are always in need of workers and which are underpopulated? It would certainly be to the benefit of these Gulf states, which now have mostly homogeneous populations, to "add some colour and diversity" to their societies in addition, of course, to the satisfaction of rescuing fellow human beings.

Again, where are Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, Oman and other oil-rich Gulf states when their fellow human beings need their assistance? Don't they believe in charity? Do they truly believe in their own long-term survival while they enjoy living in isolation from the rest of the world? How do they justify their silence and indifference in the face of a human catastrophe such as that befalling their fellow Muslims in south-eastern Europe?

Marina Sanchez-Rashid
 plines55@hotmail.com

Voluntary conservation needed

TO ASSUAGE the problem of water shortage, home owners should seriously consider digging cisterns in their yards. Though a municipality ordinance, issued more than three decades ago, made digging cisterns mandatory for all new buildings, it was later ignored by many.

Since 1992, the amounts of rainfall we have had were a prelude that we were heading for a serious water shortage problem. Digging cisterns is without a question a part of the solution to the problem. Citizens conserving water is another part of the solution. But from what I see and observe I am not really encouraged to think that many are willing to cooperate and conserve voluntarily. This is another problem that has to be dealt with in a most professional way. The people of this country are definitely going to face a harsh water shortage situation this summer and in the next summers and they should be inculcated to conserve and conserve. If people do not cooperate I don't think this problem will ever be solved or even lessened.

I think it is the government's responsibility to carry out such education because the government is the leader and the judge.

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The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

Gore faces historically tough road to White House

By Thomas Ferraro
Reuters

HISTORY IS on Vice President Al Gore's side, but only up to a point, in his quest to succeed Bill Clinton as president.

No sitting vice president has been denied his party's presidential nomination since Democrat Alben Barkley in 1952.

But only one vice president since well before the Civil War, Republican George Bush in 1988, has been elected president.

"As vice president you're blessed and cursed," said Paul Light, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington and author of the book, "Vice Presidential Power." "Vice presidents get all of the blame and none of the benefit of incumbency," said David Kozak, a political science professor at Gannon University in Erie, Pennsylvania, and a board member of the centre for the study of the presidency.

"It's easy for vice presidents to get the nomination but tough for them to win the presidency," James Thurber of American University's Centre for Congressional and Presidential Studies said.

Many factors help explain the vice presidential quandary.

Vice presidents are seen as natural heirs to the White House by the party hierarchy and during their years in office they make connections that can help them build a campaign war chest and win the nomination.

But vice presidents, as presidential nominees, also get put on the defensive, trying to explain any and all administration mistakes. They may also suffer from a desire by voters for a change in party affiliation at the

White House and from being seen as second stringers, traditionally tweaked as weak.

"Vice president just don't look good compared to the president," said Norman Ornstein, a political scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

Gore and Clinton are no exception even though the president has sought to make his No. 2 one of the most engaged ever.

While Clinton is viewed as charismatic, Gore is seen as something of a stiff. In fact, at a White House news conference last month, Clinton seemed to deliver a better pitch for Gore than Gore has been able to give for himself.

"The vice president is by nature a reticent person when it comes to talking about his life and background," Clinton said.

"It is important that the American people know more about the vice president. He served in Congress... he was a journalist and served in the armed forces in Vietnam... (and) was a principal architect of the major economic and other policies of this administration," the president said.

Polls show Gore leading his only challenger for the 2000 Democratic presidential nomination, former Sen. Bill Bradley of New Jersey, by about a two-to-one margin. But surveys also show Gore trailing the two Republican presidential front-runners, Texas Gov. George W. Bush and former American Red Cross President Elizabeth Dole, by double-digit margins.

A recent poll by the Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press found that more respondents said they would at least "consider" voting for Bush (72 per cent) or Dole (64 per cent) than for Gore (52 per cent).

In 1952, Barkley, the vice president

under embattled President Harry Truman, expressed interest in the presidential nomination, but at 74 he was dismissed as too old.

Eight years later Richard Nixon, then president Dwight Eisenhower's vice president, got the Republican presidential nomination. But he was defeated in the general election by Democrat John F. Kennedy, who promised "a new frontier." In 1968, Vice President Hubert Humphrey captured the Democratic nomination, but he lost in the general election to Nixon. Humphrey's defeat was blamed largely on the Vietnam war, which drove President Lyndon Johnson from office.

"Vice presidents are identified with the regime in power, and if it is a negative they get saddled with it," University of Maryland Political Science Professor Roger Davidson said.

Gore had no role in the Clinton sex scandal that got the president impeached. But Republicans charge that Gore failed to denounce the president strongly enough.

Ornstein said that despite Gore's problems it is too early to count him out. The American Enterprise Institute scholar noted that predictions of doom were made a decade ago about then Vice President George Bush's drive for the White House.

"There are a lot of lessons to learn from 1988. Bush was 17 points down going into the Republican convention. Voters were looking for a change but they weren't looking for a risk," Ornstein said.

"They ultimately saw (Democratic presidential nominee Michael) Dukakis as a risk. Vice presidents, by definition, are not seen as a much of a risk." Former vice presidents, like sitting ones, have had great success in getting their party's presi-

dential nomination. The only two to seek the nomination in the past half century, Nixon in 1968 and Democrat Walter Mondale in 1984, both got it.

Dan Quayle, who served as Bush's vice president, could break that trend. Polls show him deep in a pack of about a dozen Republican White House hopefuls.

At Gannon University, Kozak offered an explanation for Quayle's plight. "All vice presidents have been ribbed, but the ribbing of Quayle crossed the line to ridicule," he said.

Gettysburg College Political Science Professor Shirley Anne Warshaw, like Kozak a board member of the Centre for the Study of the Presidency, said "politics are cyclical." "After eight years of one party in power, the public looks toward the other. They figure one party might be tapped out of ideas and that it's time to try the other," Warshaw said.

Another problem for vice presidents pursuing the presidency is that "they are susceptible to attack because they are a member of the party in power. No matter how strong a record the administration may have, it can still be attacked. It is easier to attack and tear down than build up and create," she said.

As for Gore, "he is the most engaged vice president in history, but that still isn't saying much," she said, adding that senior presidential aides, not vice presidents, make key administration decisions and explain them to the public.

"Kosovo is a good example. You don't hear from Gore on administration's policy. Instead you hear from Madeleine Albright and Sandy Berger," Clinton's secretary of state and national security adviser. "The public makes the distinction."



Al Gore's up against history. Only one vice president since well before the Civil War, Republican George Bush in 1988, has been elected president (Reuters photo)

Non-existent crime wave ravages peaceful Norway

By Inger Sethov
Reuters

A CRIME wave is ravaging Norway, one of the most peaceful nations on earth — or so some politicians would have you believe.

Police say that politicians scrambling for votes in the run-up to local elections in September and a new media focus on violence are spurring unjustified fears that Norway is descending into a lawless gangland.

Norwegians, for instance, are less than half as likely to get mugged as their neighbours the Swedes, also living in an environment of Nordic tranquillity. A Norwegian is 30 times less likely to be murdered than a resident of Chicago.

"I'm in close contact with my colleagues in other countries and they think I'm living in paradise. Obviously, the population of Norway think otherwise," Oslo police chief Ingelin Killengren told Reuters.

Partly as a response to fears of crime, police are increasing their presence and from this year can even be found on snowboards patrolling pistes outside Oslo.

Crime statistics from the Oslo police department showed the number of recorded street crimes fell 3.3 per cent in 1998 from the previous year. Among worrying trends, however, were the wider use of guns, more extreme violence and more youth crime.

Criminology studies, meanwhile, showed a growing fear of street violence among Norway's 4.5 million people and revealed that the most scared were the least likely to be victims of crime.

"Elderly women in Oslo often ask me if it's safe to go around the corner to buy the paper in the morning or if it's dangerous to go shopping downtown. That demonstrates a situation that is blown completely out of proportion," Killengren said.

In reality, she said, street violence typically involved drunken brawling by men in their twenties in the early hours of Sunday morning.

There were just 35 murders in Norway in 1998, four less than in 1997 and five less than the 10-year average, one of the lowest in the world. Only three of the last decade's 388 murder cases remain unsolved.

Police records showed the sharpest rise was in domestic crimes, which made up 29 per cent of all violent crime in 1998.

Violence at home rose 14 per cent in 1998 from a year earlier.

Criminologist Sturla Falck said political promises to crack down on crime were a "quick and easy way" to gather votes in any electoral campaign, and noted growing political support for the opposition far-right Progress Party.

The party raised its representation in parliament in the last general election in 1997 to 25 of 165 seats from only 10 in 1993, mostly because of its appeal to Norwegians' fear of crime and immigration, Falck said.

'A Norwegian is 30 times less likely to be murdered than a resident of Chicago'

"Massive support to populist parties, such as the Progress Party, forces other parties to prioritise crime," he said. "The political debate is turned into a race to present the best solutions, creating a sense that it is a big problem," he said. Norway was "a peaceful island in the north," where violent crimes, such as assault and robbery, were less than half as frequent as in neighbouring Sweden, Denmark and Finland.

Still, centrist Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik has called for a greater police presence on the streets of Oslo in a drive to be tough on crime — adopting a core issue from the Progress Party's political agenda.

Bondevik, a Lutheran priest and member of the Christian People's Party, said the Oslo police department would strengthen its squad to combat crime. Bondevik's government is a shaky coalition with just 42 of 165 seats in parliament.

"Police should be tough on milder types of crime to show that crime is not tolerated under any circumstances," he told parliament.

Falck said the crime debate was enhanced by a dramatic change in the role of the media. Norwegians lived with one state-run television station — NRK — until 1992. Since then, new stations have stepped up coverage of crime and violence.

"Ten years ago Norway had a very homogenous society and we had one media channel with harmless and peaceful news coverage without competition," he said.

The police chief also said: "We are used to a peaceful society. Certain single incidents of crime mean a lot to public opinion." For example, two taxi drivers have been killed since the start of the year.

An over-representation of immigrant youth in street crime statistics contributed to a fear of foreigners. "We have a very short history of immigration. It scares us a little," Killengren said. Around 18 per cent of Oslo's population has an immigrant background.

Killengren said Oslo police were turning to less traditional methods. "In order to mingle with the youths we have to adapt to their activity patterns," she said.

"We have bicycle police, horse police, officers on roller skates and police on skis. The latest is uniformed police on snowboards."

Security experts watch conflict in Yugoslavia

By Aleksander Rozens
Reuters

MICHAEL VAN Giesen used to provide security for British royalty. Now he sells his services to American executives travelling abroad — and, thanks to the conflict in Yugoslavia, business has never been better.

Van Giesen expects the NATO air strikes on Yugoslavia to increase the already considerable demand for his services.

"It has been an ongoing issue for the last two years," said his boss, Robert Strang, head of New York-based security specialists Strang Hayes Consulting. "Many company officers do not require security (to travel) with them but people are much more aware of international travel and safety," Strang said.

Vociferous demonstrations against the NATO attacks on Serbia have been held outside U.S. embassies in Europe and Russia. A bomb blast outside a shop selling Apple computers in Athens may have been the first action against a U.S. business, prompting U.S. Ambassador Nicholas Burns to ask Greek officials to increase security for American interests.

"America is viewed all over the world

as the extreme capitalist demagogue," said Fred Rustmann, a former Central Intelligence Agency case officer and now head of West Palm Beach, Florida-based CTC International Group Inc., which advises businesses on security.

"Right now America is the No. 1 target. If they can't hit an embassy they'll go for something else that has recognition such as a McDonald's," he said.

The head of security at a large U.S. corporation that has many executives travelling overseas told Reuters, "I sent out a letter to our travel department warning travellers to be cautious. We have a situation in the world where certain groups are looking very angrily at members of NATO nations." William Daly, a managing director at another security firm, Kroll Associates, said a protracted conflict in Yugoslavia could result in threats or actual violence against U.S. government facilities and businesses overseas.

For some executives, travel abroad now routinely involves checking in with the U.S. embassy and taking note of its location, as well as the locations of medical facilities and local law enforcement agencies.

Most concerns today focus on kidnapp-

ing, robbery and political protest, according to Strang. Before the conflict in Yugoslavia, U.S. citizens were being targeted by groups unhappy about the U.S. bombing of Iraq, he said.

Van Giesen, vice president at his firm's London office, said sending NATO ground troops into the Yugoslav province of Kosovo, as some are advising, could put the United States "further into the spotlight" and increase anti-U.S. sentiment.

Firms such as Strang Hayes, which has 300 employees in 50 countries, help provide security by reviewing an executive's overseas itinerary in advance after consulting with police and U.S. State Department officials.

Often a company will try to learn if a terrorist group has included its personnel on a "target" list. And sometimes firms such as Strang Hayes and CTC are called in to help extricate an executive from a troubled country.

"We are in the prevention business, but then sometimes you have to respond," Strang said.

Executives needing a security detail to travel with them likely will invite Thomas Petro, a 21-year veteran of the U.S. secret service and now a vice presi-

dent at Strang Hayes.

Petro says he looks to protect his client "360 degrees," establishing concentric circles, or perimeters, of defence.

Within the first or inner circle is the client. Outside it are buffers such as guards or people in an assembly hall. In a restaurant this buffer could be a group of tables, Petro said.

Rustmann said some U.S. firms with overseas operations do advance planning for evacuating employees in case of trouble.

Such precautions can involve secret caches of money, weapons, vehicles, food and water and a mapped escape route, he said.

The head of corporate security who sent a letter of caution to his firm last week said a key to being safe is being inconspicuous. The executive, whose background is in domestic and overseas airport security, said business people are most vulnerable en route to and from airports.

"Very often some business people insist on travelling in a limousine — that's when they become conspicuous," he said.

Rustmann agreed. "Keep a low profile. That's the No. 1 thing," he said.

Filipinos seek Millennium light on mountain

By Abe De Ramos
Reuters

FRANCISCO DELA ROSA has seen God twice.

"He is a big man in a white robe, with white beard... and a glowing face," says Dela Rosa as he sits at the foot of a cross on a reputedly sacred spot on the Philippine mountain of Banahaw.

"All the chaos that we see, all the crime, the fighting, the El Nino, these are signs that the day of judgement is near," adds the one-armed lottery ticket vendor.

Dela Rosa, 60, is one of thousands of pilgrims who have begun flocking to the 2,250-metre Mount Banahaw as Asia's only Roman Catholic country prepares to mark Jesus Christ's crucifixion 2,000 years ago.

Most Filipinos will spend the holy week visiting churches. Hundreds will fog themselves with glass-encrusted whips until they bleed.

A dozen or so zealots will get themselves nailed to wooden crosses to atone for their sins.

Dela Rosa will simply seek solace on the mountain against cataclysms he fears will engulf the world in the new Millennium.

Three hours by car from Manila, Banahaw gained its mystic reputation from 19th century tales about "a sacred voice" that spoke to those who had gone there to seek talismans or pursue pagan beliefs which Spanish colonisers had tried to suppress.

At least 120 Christian-based sects have shot up since then to worship the mountain. To them, the new Millennium will bring either armageddon or unprecedented prosperity to the Philippines.

About 300,000 pilgrims and tourists are expected to trek up the mountain this Lent.

"We must all prepare for it (the Millennium)," says white-haired Isabel Suarez, who leads a sect called Mistica.

Called Suprema by her 50,000 followers, Suarez says the end will come through earthquakes, wars and famines.

"Aside from prayers, we must prepare for our daily, practical needs too," she told Reuters from her whitewashed home at the foot of Mount Banahaw where she keeps sacks of milled rice to prepare for the day of reckoning.

Manila businessman Cecilio Saguisag said he came to Banahaw six years ago after the Virgin Mary told him to bathe at a waterfall on the mountain.

Now, he leads a sect which believes only the enlightened will survive the "cleansing."

To survive the temblors and tidal waves, one must give up material desires, Saguisag said.

"Those who will be left are those living right."

Unprecedented prosperity, not doomsday, is what Boy Fajardo, a traditional healer, sees ahead.

The Philippines, he says, will be the centre of global political and economic power because Banahaw has been divinely chosen as the next "navel of spiritual centres in the world."

The world's spiritual navel,



Francisco dela Rosa, 60, narrates how the 'Holy Spirit' in Mount Banahaw cured a fatal infection in his left arm that was severed 28 years ago (Reuters photo)

according to him, changes every 2,000 years and it is now the Philippines' turn. Four thousand years ago it was Egypt, and then it was Britain.

"Banahaw attracts spirituality. From this navel will emanate power sources," he says.

Fajardo's views find support among members of another sect called Ispiratino Pilipino Catholic Church, who believe the Philippines is the "new Jerusalem."

"Jerusalem was transferred by the angels from the Middle East because there is so much spirituality here and turmoil there," explains sect member Tirso Lontok, who was born on the mountain.

To depict Mount Calvary, sect members have erected three wooden crosses on a hill. To reach the new Calvary, pilgrims follow a trail of "stations" lighting candles and chanting prayers. Each Lenten season brings new visitors to the mystic mountain.

Her flock may be growing but Suprema Suarez is not happy.

"Mount Banahaw has been treated with disrespect," she said, referring to rubbish left behind. "This is the reason why the sacred voice no longer makes itself heard." It is man, not God, who will destroy the world, Lontok said.

"The garbage shows what some of us have become. The message of the sacred voice is to have a clean self, which translates to a clean environment. So it is man who is ruining the earth."

Bahrain economy seen weathering weak oil prices

MANAMA (R) — Bahrain's economy, unlike other Arab Gulf oil producing states, is weathering weak oil prices and is likely to continue on a steady growth path, a senior banker said Tuesday.

"Bahrain's economy has been weathering the decline in oil prices since the 1980s because Bahrain does not go through the boom and bust cycles," Bahrain Middle East Bank chief executive Albert Kittaneh told Reuters in an interview.

"They (Bahrain) don't overspend and they don't underspend. Economic policy in Bahrain is prudent, and its economic growth is steady," he said.

He declined to give an estimate for Gulf island's current real economic growth, but some bankers believe it is running at between two and three per cent a year.

"The government of Bahrain has been able to properly diversify the Bahraini economy over the past 25 years," Kittaneh said. Oil income currently constitutes 55 per cent of the national economy.

"The financial and economic policies of the government have been excellent. The impact of the (recent global) financial turmoil did not affect Bahrain," he added.

Bahrain has projected a wider deficit of 320 million dinars (\$849 million) for

the fiscal years 1999 and 2000 compared with 150 million dinars in the 1997/98 two-year budget, due to a projected drop in oil income of 28 and 29 per cent respectively.

Bankers, however, say Bahrain's diversified economy is largely likely to shield it against any shock caused by a steep drop in oil prices.

Bahrain is a small and independent oil exporter, producing around 40,000 barrels per day (bpd) from its own oil fields. It also receives the entire production of around 120,000 bpd from an offshore oil field it shares with Saudi Arabia.

Kittaneh said Bahrain, which has the Middle East's largest aluminium smelter, would continue to be the Gulf's major banking and financial hub. "I think it will remain the only financial centre in the Arab World," he said.

He indicated that banks in Bahrain had gone past commercial banking into investment banking and offered value-added activities, while banks in neighbouring states were still focusing on domestic retail banking.

Kittaneh urged Gulf states to speed up their privatisation programmes in order to boost their economies and to lure more foreign investments.

"GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) states have not

completed their privatisation programmes. They have to privatise companies and list companies to increase the market," Kittaneh noted.

"Until the privatisation programmes are implemented and totally enforced, you don't have many investment opportunities," he said.

The bulk of big industries in the GCC, which groups Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, are government-owned. This includes areas such as petrochemicals, electricity, water and telecommunications.

"The key issue is that the GCC has to privatise and initiate privatisation programmes in order to capture more foreign investment. Bahrain is the only place that has opened up with foreigners being able to own up to 49 per cent of listed companies," Kittaneh explained.

Moody's Investors Service in March assigned a BAA3 issuer rating to Bahrain's domestic currency debt, reflecting the island's generally prudent management of its fiscal accounts and low domestic and external debt levels.

It said the authorities were maintaining good control over state expenditure and delivering services to the public in a relatively efficient manner.

OECD report urges more flexibility in euro-zone job market

PARIS (AFP) — Labour markets in the euro-zone need greater flexibility to stimulate growth in Europe and cushion it from regional economic shocks, according to a report published Wednesday by the OECD.

In its first major study on the euro-zone, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) tries to convince the 11 countries which have adopted the common currency that they must follow its recommendations.

The think-tank urges countries to encourage greater mobility of European workers within the European Union (EU) and to allow for more flexibility in salary levels.

The report laments the minimum-wage legislation in euro-zone countries that inflates salary levels and therefore limits job market flexibility.

Such policies can also "blunt the incentive for geographic... labour mobility," the think tank said.

Comparing the euro-zone to other single-currency areas like the United States, Canada and Australia, the report said too few Europeans work in other zone countries, even when high unemployment plagues their home country.

Only 5.5 million of 370 million EU citizens — about 1.5 per cent — work in other zone countries.

Mobility is important to absorb economic shocks resulting from exchange rates and interest rates dictated by a common policy out of the European Central Bank, the report said.

The report also urges euro-zone governments to reduce public debt to only 1.5 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) to ensure they do not exceed the maximum three per cent debt allowed.

The OECD remains optimistic about the zone and estimates growth will hit two per cent this year, but not 2.5 per cent as it had predicted last fall.

Argentina's growth halved, outlook worse

BUENOS AIRES (R) — The deepening emerging market crisis caused Argentine growth to halve in 1998, clouding this year's outlook as the country faces the added challenge of a devaluation by top trading partner Brazil, the government has said.

Gross domestic product grew 4.2 per cent in 1998, down sharply from 8.6 per cent in 1997, as emerging market mayhem in the second half of the year, following Russia's rouble devaluation, hit Argentina's economy hard and pushed rates higher.

The government said the economy contracted 0.5 per cent in the last quarter of 1998 from the same quarter a year earlier, revealing the scars of emerging market turmoil as positive growth rates earlier last year turned negative.

"In the fourth quarter of the year the economy began to feel the effects of the international crisis," the economy ministry said in a statement.

prices finally undermined public finances.

"We saw some initial panic where bankers were buying at 150 and the banks in the inter-bank exchange were selling up to 155," said one trader, who asked to remain anonymous.

Most currency dealers were selling the dollar at 125 to 140 Kazakh tenge, a statement issued by the National Bank said.

"Keep in mind, that at the start of today's trading on the markets an excessively nervous mood continued to weigh heavily, which brought about... an exaggerated U.S. dollar exchange rate," the statement said.

Trade volume on the currency exchange shot up to \$3.5 million on Tuesday, the National Bank said, amid huge demand for the dollar.

That was up from only \$200,000 worth of trading the day before. Traders had stood back on Monday to see how the National Bank's weekend decision not to defend the currency would turn out.

Some exchange dealers were attempting to sell the dollar for up to 200 tenge, but one trader called such rates "unrealistic."

Exchange Rates Tuesday, 06-04-99									
	UNITED STATES DOLLAR	GERMAN MARK	FRANCE FRANC	UNITED KINGDOM POUND	SWITZERLAND FRANC	ITALY LIRA	SPAIN PESETA	NETHERLANDS GILDER	EURO
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927	1.8777	1.6387	0.1945	2.3181	0.3577	0.7080
BAHRAIN DINAR	5.2075	1.0000	1.0208	9.8472	8.7406	1.0301	12.2881	1.0005	3.7508
SAUDI RIYAL	5.1863	0.9798	1.0000	9.7441	8.5416	1.0391	12.0293	1.0781	3.6740
QATAR RIYAL	0.6328	0.1005	0.1028	1.0000	0.9792	0.1028	1.2607	0.1130	0.3801
OMAN RIYAL	0.5438	0.1027	0.1048	1.0212	1.0000	0.1028	1.1971	0.1084	0.3410
YEMEN RIYAL	1.4227	0.2708	0.2791	8.8585	8.4555	0.2839	3.0000	0.3886	0.3054
LIBYAN DINAR	0.4314	0.0814	0.0831	0.8100	0.7652	0.0839	1.0000	1.0000	3.4080
EGYPT POUND	4.8136	0.9087	0.9278	9.0385	8.8508	0.9360	11.584	1.0000	3.4080
LEBANON LIRA	21.2147	4.0047	4.0882	39.6356	36.3078	4.1252	48.7782	4.4272	15.5230
NEW DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2690	0.2722	2.6522	2.5871	0.2746	3.2742	0.2734	1.0350
LIBYAN DYNAR	0.8848	0.1870	0.1905	1.8616	1.6773	0.1721	2.0512	0.1638	0.6786
GERMAN MARK	2.5742	0.4859	0.4981	4.8336	4.7352	0.5075	5.9872	0.5048	1.6863
FRANCE FRANC	2.0892	0.3963	0.4045	3.9417	3.8598	0.4082	4.8601	0.4061	1.3433
UNITED KINGDOM POUND	8.6328	1.6386	1.6636	16.2101	15.9733	1.6787	20.2118	1.7934	6.1172
SWITZERLAND FRANC	1.7154	0.3238	0.3306	3.2211	3.1541	0.3336	3.9785	0.3564	1.2145
ITALY LIRA	2.9003	0.5475	0.5590	5.4680	5.3258	0.5640	6.7332	0.5525	2.0534
NETHERLANDS GILDER	11.8743	2.2038	2.2487	21.9215	21.4553	2.2701	27.0824	2.4253	8.2954
EURO	25.4633	4.8105	4.9138	47.8509	46.8568	4.9553	59.0724	0.2941	18.0422
NETHERLANDS GILDER	53.0032	10.0234	10.2314	98.6592	97.6237	10.3241	123.0784	11.2399	37.5902
FRANCE FRANC	2.4558	0.4241	0.4328	4.2185	4.1308	0.4373	5.2373	0.4867	1.5433
UNITED KINGDOM POUND	4.2063	0.8114	0.8263	8.0711	7.9034	0.8253	9.9540	0.8830	0.5370
NETHERLANDS GILDER	17.5980	3.4184	3.4887	34.0040	33.2975	3.5213	41.8785	3.7811	12.8212
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	1.1080	0.4008	0.4082	3.9870	3.9042	0.4078	4.9221	0.4841	1.5533
CANADA DOLLAR	1.2133	0.4008	0.4082	3.9870	3.9042	0.4078	4.9221	0.4841	1.5533
EURO	1.3155	0.2483	0.2535	2.4701	2.4185	0.2558	3.0484	0.2733	0.9314

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR									
	UNITED STATES DOLLAR	GERMAN MARK	FRANCE FRANC	UNITED KINGDOM POUND	SWITZERLAND FRANC	ITALY LIRA	SPAIN PESETA	NETHERLANDS GILDER	EURO
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927	1.8777	1.6387	0.1945	2.3181	0.3577	0.7080
BAHRAIN DINAR	5.2075	1.0000	1.0208	9.8472	8.7406	1.0301	12.2881	1.0005	3.7508
SAUDI RIYAL	5.1863	0.9798	1.0000	9.7441	8.5416	1.0391	12.0293	1.0781	3.6740
QATAR RIYAL	0.6328	0.1005	0.1028	1.0000	0.9792	0.1028	1.2607	0.1130	0.3801
OMAN RIYAL	0.5438	0.1027	0.1048	1.0212	1.0000	0.1028	1.1971	0.1084	0.3410
YEMEN RIYAL	1.4227	0.2708	0.2791	8.8585	8.4555	0.2839	3.0000	0.3886	0.3054
LIBYAN DINAR	0.4314	0.0814	0.0831	0.8100	0.7652	0.0839	1.0000	1.0000	3.4080
EGYPT POUND	4.8136	0.9087	0.9278	9.0385	8.8508	0.9360	11.584	1.0000	3.4080
LEBANON LIRA	21.2147	4.0047	4.0882	39.6356	36.3078	4.1252	48.7782	4.4272	15.5230
NEW DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2690	0.2722	2.6522	2.5871	0.2746	3.2742	0.2734	1.0350
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EURO	1.3155	0.2483	0.2535	2.4701	2.4185	0.2558	3.0484	0.2733	0.9314

MAJOR CURRENCES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR

NOTE: NEITHER ACCESS NOR THE PUBLISHER IS RESPONSIBLE
FOR ANY ERRORS OR OMISSIONS

DEPOSIT INTEREST RATES

CBJA

CURRENCY	1 M	3 M	6 M	1 YEAR
US DOLLAR	4.8802	4.8802	4.7500	5.2320
GERMAN MARK	5.3800	5.1800	5.0800	5.2800
UNITED KINGDOM POUND	3.0400	2.8800	2.8400	2.9200
FRANCE FRANC	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
NETHERLANDS GILDER	1.1800	1.1000	1.2000	1.3400
ITALY LIRA	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
EURO	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN

CURRENCY	ASK	BID
US DOLLAR	0.1082	0.1070
GERMAN MARK	1.1222	1.1200
UNITED KINGDOM POUND	0.3878	0.3860
FRANCE FRANC	0.4798	0.4770
NETHERLANDS GILDER	0.1158	0.1140
ITALY LIRA	0.0038	0.0036
NETHERLANDS GILDER	0.3442	0.3420
ITALY LIRA	0.0032	0.0030
EURO	0.7088	0.7020

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Islamic International Arab Bank posts remarkable results in its first year

THE ISLAMIC International Arab Bank posted a JD835.600 net profit last year and the bank's share of the profits from investments was around JD2.6 million. The bank's annual report also showed that the balance sheet total amounted to JD137.3 million and that the shareholders' equity totalled JD40.6 million. Total customer deposits and "specified investments" amounted to JD54.3 million whereas the total amount of financing and investments in commodities was around JD85.9 million.

Board Chairman Khaled Shoman told the general assembly that the bank, the second in the local market to operate according to Islamic principles, has introduced a new and unique service from the beginning of the year by accepting "specified investments" or deposits

for investments for various periods starting from three months. Investors or depositors are rewarded twice yearly as profits are to be paid at the end of June and December of each year.

The bank which started operations in February 1998, succeeded in achieving a general profit rate of 7.25 per cent for investment accounts denominated in Jordanian dinars and 3.9 per cent general profit rate in foreign currencies (Al Arab Al Yawm + Al Aswaq + Al Dustour).

Correction: It was erroneously mentioned last month that the Jordan Islamic Bank for Finance and Investment was Jordan's only interest-free bank. The fact is that there are two, the second being the Islamic International Arab Bank in which the Arab Bank Ltd. has a large equity. (Jordan Times).

Farmers want government to open markets to absorb agricultural surplus

FARMERS BLAME the government for their deteriorating conditions and an official source at the Agricultural Marketing Organisation admits that there is a stiff competition in our export markets from countries that produce similar farm products. "Exports are continuing to most neighbouring markets," he said adding, "There is an imbalance and a production as well as a marketing problem in the agricultural sector." He attributed the problem to unorganised production in the absence of control mechanisms that oblige farmers and educate them when to plant. The official source said the countries that imported our farm products years ago have now become producing states.

Musleh Hamdan, a farmer, said this situation is a yearly phenomenon and the responsibility falls on the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Marketing Organisation. He added

that some agricultural products are imported from the Jordan Valley which can be exported through barter arrangements. "The indebtedness is not that full burden on the farmer if sufficient markets can be made available to absorb the surplus at reasonable prices that would provide a return enough to cover the cost and suffice the basic needs," he emphasised.

Masoud Numeimat, another farmer, said low products prices are not providing any profit to the farmers in light of lack of markets to absorb the output surplus. "The support needed from the government is to remedy marketing bottlenecks and help market the produce at prices that would cover production costs and be enough to repay accumulated debt," he said. "The suffering is continuing and deteriorating conditions are very obvious" (Al Ra'i).

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Old skills could be quite useful today, and even profitable. It's good to learn new ones, of course, and you should be launching into that kind of project soon. Don't forget what you already know, however. That'll come in very handy today, when it comes to making money.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You may be a little stressed about money initially, but you're about to get over it. You'll be coming up with a lot of good ideas good, which will divert your attention and maybe increase your abundance — eventually. Instead of finding a way to get rich quick, you'll learn how to get rich slowly, so you can build a legacy.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Commiserate with a friend who's having financial difficulties, but don't try to bail him or her out. This person could spend more in a day than you make in a week, and with a lot less effort. Keep what you earn to yourself. You may need it.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) Pay close attention to what's going on around you today. Very quick action may be required, and you might have to let go of your ideas about how things are supposed to be. If you're agile, you might wind up with something better than you thought you could have. A good partner will be helpful, too.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) Looks like there's plenty of work to keep you busy today, more than you want, in fact. You'd just as soon be out running through the green fields, in search of love and adventure. Well, the adventure might be out there, but the love is more like nearby. Instead of elsewhere, look up.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) Your hard work is starting to pay off, and you're making a very good impression on a person you like a lot. This person is not just attracted to your good looks and pleasant demeanour, but also to your ingenuity. Use that to make a little time together.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) There's a controversy brewing, and you might play a major part in how it all works out. The conflict isn't necessarily between you and someone else, but it does involve people close by. You get to be the moderator again, much to your delight. You're great at that job.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) There's a difficult problem at work today that could cause tempers to be short. Don't get upset yourself. That'll just make things worse. Instead, practice skills you've been recently learning. You'll come out looking like the champ, and you love it when that happens.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're not usually the best person in the world for setting up routines. That's often left to someone else. Sagittarians are better known for bending the rules than making them, but today, if you play by the book, your success is assured.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) It'll be hard to stay in hiding today. People are starting to clamour for your opinion. They need your advice so they can decide how to proceed, and you've probably got a few choice things to tell them. Be nice.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) Looks like something you've been avoiding is about to come due. You hate to bend schedule, but if you're not careful, that could happen. Avoid it by planning ahead. What do you need to have finished by Friday, and how much of it can you get done right now? The more the better.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) You have a heart as big as Texas, and it's made of pure gold. Unfortunately, you may not have quite that much in your pockets, and if you see a friend in need, you'll want to give everything you've got. Instead of sharing your wealth, share your wisdom instead. That and hugs are all your friend really needs.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

Door to investment in Libyan oil may open wide

CAIRO (AFP) — International energy firms may be encouraged to invest in Libya's oil industry now that U.N. economic sanctions are on track to be lifted, firms and analysts said Tuesday.

Royal Dutch/Shell expressed interest in Libya where it currently has no operations, while smaller British firm Lasso said it might consider expanding a harbour where it would export oil from its new fields.

"We would be interested in future opportunities in Libya as the country holds major oil and gas reserves," once sanctions are lifted, a Royal Dutch/Shell spokeswoman

said in London. The end of the sanctions, which have hampered business for European firms in Libya, may also lead to a lifting of unilateral U.S. sanctions and clear the way for a return of U.S. giants such as Exxon, analysts said.

But the United States said it plans to maintain unilateral sanctions first imposed on Libya in 1986.

And other oil giants are unsure about returning to the market. A spokesman for BP-Amoco said it had no interest in Libya and "it's much too early to say if we plan some developments over there."

There was no immediate

word from companies that already have stakes in Libya, such as Elf Aquitaine and Total of France, ENI of Italy, Repsol of Spain and OMV of Austria.

The prize in Libya is big. Leo Drollas, oil analyst at the Centre for Global Energy Studies in London, said Libya has 30 billion barrels of proven recoverable reserves, more than the 17 billion barrels in Nigeria or even China's 24 billion barrels.

"Libya has an enormous potential and is underdeveloped because of sanctions," Drollas said, while noting that its production is limited by OPEC quotas.

"Companies will not want to invest in capacity and not use it," he said.

Medhi Varzi, oil analyst at Dresner Kleinwort Benson Bank, said Europeans and Americans would both be tempted.

"Libya's got a lot of high quality sweet crude, which is highly sought after in Europe," he said.

Walid Khadduri, executive editor of the Cyprus-based Middle East Economic Survey weekly, told AFP that "the big question now is how quick and how big the oil companies will come in" to invest in production and exploration.

Khadduri, who spoke by

telephone from Nicosia, said it would take months before any negotiations begin on production or exploration deals.

He said Libya has had no real problem maintaining its OPEC quota of around 1.2 million barrels a day and has been able to buy spare parts for its oil industry despite the sanctions, albeit at a higher cost.

But it would take years before Libya could increase its production, he said.

Khadduri said another question is how the end of the sanctions would improve Libya's refining and petrochemical industries, areas hurt by lack of technology transfers.

HSBC BritishBank celebrates 50 years in Jordan

HSBC BRITISHBANK is celebrating its 50th Anniversary of continuous banking operations in Jordan. It was on Sept. 21 1949, that the British Bank of the Middle East opened a branch in Amman thereby beginning a relationship that has flourished over the past fifty years.

Today HSBC BritishBank is one of the leading banks in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It was the first bank to launch ATMs and is currently the only bank to provide international ATM cash withdrawals through its GlobalAccess card and through Hexagon, the bank's own PC banking service.

In celebration of its 50th anniversary in Jordan, HSBC BritishBank has announced major educational sponsorship initiatives under the umbrella of the BritishBank Foundation — a major community sponsorship programme launched by the bank earlier.

Announcing the initiatives at a press conference, on Tuesday at the Marriott Hotel, Mr. Robert Bray, Chief Executive Officer of HSBC BritishBank Jordan said: "The BritishBank Foundation is a symbol of our close association and continuing commitment to the communities which we serve. I am pleased at the success of the first programme run by the Foundation — the sponsorship of a Jordanian Masters student in the U.K. — and am delighted to announce further initiatives."

The second initiative announced by Mr. Bray is the sponsorship of two Jordanians between the ages of 17 and 25 on

Raleigh International expeditions to Chile, Namibia or Belize in association with the Al Hassan Youth Award. Raleigh International, a U.K. registered charity, has built itself a reputation over the past 14 years for exposing individuals to social and environmental project work in remote parts of the world.

The sponsorship will offer the unique opportunity to experience working with ventures from over 70 different countries, in challenging environments. Mr. Bray announced that, as part of the HSBC BritishBank's 50th Anniversary, the bank would sponsor a number of incentives for customers and details of these initiatives will be announced as the year progresses.

Commenting on the bank's 50th Anniversary Mr. Bray observed: "It is a source of great pride to us that in the last 50 years, HSBC BritishBank has been an innovative catalyst of banking development at the heart of the community in Jordan. We are also indebted to our customers and our staff for their loyal support over the past fifty years. He noted that many customers who opened accounts with HSBC BritishBank in the initial years still maintained them today.

Mr. Bray concluded that "We will concentrate on developing our personal banking services, and those areas of corporate banking where we can make the maximum use of the HSBC Group's global network — trade finance, corporate advisory, treasury and foreign exchange services."

BritishBank considers itself privileged to have been able to contribute towards Jordan's growth. We are proud of our 50 years here and look forward to the next 50 years with enthusiasm and confidence."

HSBC BritishBank is the largest and most widely represented international bank in the Middle East with 31 branches throughout the UAE, Jordan, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and Lebanon, an offshore banking unit in Bahrain and a branch in Ramallah.

HSBC Holdings PLC is one of the largest banking and financial services organisations in the world. At Dec. 31 1998, HSBC had assets of \$483 billion, shareholder's funds of \$27.4 billion and a total capital ratio of 13.6 per cent.

Its international network comprises more than 5,000 offices in 79 countries and territories operating in Asia Pacific region, Europe, the Americas, the Middle East and Africa. With primary listings on the London and Hong Kong stock exchanges, shares in HSBC Holdings PLC are held by some 160,000 shareholders in more than 90 countries.

Through a global network linked by advanced technology the Group provides a comprehensive range of financial services: Personal, corporate, investment and private banking; trade services; cash management; treasury and capital markets services; insurance; consumer and business finance; pension and investment fund management; trustee services; and securities and custody services.

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Tuesday, 06-04-99		
BANKS		
ARAB BK	214,800	214,000 -0.37%
NTL BK	1,210	1,220 0.83%
JO. OF JORDAN	1,280	1,280 0.00%
INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK	1,480	1,380 -6.76%
THE FOUNDED BK	2,830	2,830 0.00%
JO. KOWATY BK	1,880	1,880 0.00%
JO. GULF BK	1,880	1,880 0.00%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1,880	1,870 -0.53%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0,810	0,810 0.00%
BANKS INDEX 278,880 POINT -0.25%		
INSURANCE		
ARAB INS	2,100	2,100 0.00%
JO. GULF INS	1,880	1,780 -5.32%
INSURANCE INDEX 123,310 POINT -0.28%		
SERVICES		
ELECTRIC POWER	1,640	1,630 -0.61%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	1,000	1,000 0.00%
JO. INTL. TRADING CTRY	0,270	0,260 -3.70%
JO. INTL. TRADING EDU	1,430	1,430 0.00%
UNIFIED LAND TRAM	1,080	1,080 0.00%
UNITED FOR FINANCIAL INVS	1,080	1,040 -3.70%
SERVICES INDEX 112,270 POINT +0.39%		
INDUSTRY		
CEMENT	3,820	3,850 0.79%
PHOSPHATE	2,830	2,870 1.41%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10,880	10,880 0.00%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	1,280	1,280 0.00%
ARAB BID	1,280	1,280 0.00%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1,480	1,380 -6.76%
JO. PIPES	0,880	0,870 -1.14%
NTL STEEL	0,780	0,770 -1.28%
JO. AL DAWA	0,770	0,760 -1.30%
INDUST. EAST COMPLEX	0,870	0,870 0.00%
JO. STEEL	1,010	1,000 -0.99%
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1,780	1,720 -3.37%
JO. OF JORDAN	1,410	1,410 0.00%
JO. OF JORDAN	0,380	0,380 0.00%
PAPER CONVERTING	0,880	0,830 -5.68%
NTL IND	0,880	0,830 -5.68%
PETRO-CHEMICAL	0,280	0,240 -14.29%
JO. OF JORDAN	0,770	0,760 -1.30%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	0,880	0,840 -4.55%
GENERAL INVS	0,880	0,820 -6.82%
NTL CABLE	0,810	0,810 0.00%
JO. OF JORDAN	0,880	0,880 0.00%
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM	1,220	1,220 0.00%
KAWTHIR	0,820	0,820 0.00%
EL-ZAY	1,170	1,180 0.85%
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0,880	0,880 0.00%
JO. OF JORDAN	0,880	0,880 0.00%
NTL ALUMINIUM	0,880	0,810 -7.95%
INDUSTRY INDEX 87,130 POINT -0.25%		
PARALLEL		
EXPORT BK 1/2	0,840	0,820 -2.38%
JO. INTL. MS	0,880	0,840 -4.55%
UNION INVS. CORP	0,770	0,780 1.30%
ADVANCED PHAR	0,880	0,820 -6.82%
MEDICAL APPLIANCES	0,880	0,830 -5.68%
AL DAWLAT	0,880	0,880 0.00%
ARAB INVESTORS	1,110	1,110 0.00%
ARAB INTL. TRADE	0,880	0,880 0.00%
CAPITAL & AUDIAL	0,880	0,880 0.00%
ARAB	0,880	0,880 0.00%
AL RAZI	0,820	0,820 0.00%
UNITED ENG. IND	0,810	0,810 0.00%
NTL DAW	0,880	0,810 -7.95%
GROUND INDEX 178,78 POINT -0.09%		

Major Japanese shoe seller folds with \$188m debt

TOKYO (AFP) — One of the largest shoe sellers in Japan, Americaya Shoe Co., was declared bankrupt Monday with 22.7 billion yen (\$188 million) in liabilities, research agencies said.

Americaya ended its 74-year history after it was hit by the country's prolonged economic woes and the consumption slump, private research agency Teikoku Databank said in a statement.

The company was declared bankrupt by the Tokyo district court, the agency said.

Tokyo-based Americaya operated a chain of 109 stores nationwide and had outlets in Hong Kong and Singapore.

Its sales peaked at 21 billion yen in the year to February 1993, but they fell to just 16 billion yen in the year to February 1998, Teikoku said.

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United brimming with confidence before Juventus showdown

MANCHESTER (AFP) — Confidence amongst the Manchester United players in the run up to Wednesday night's Champions League duel against Juventus is sky high insists captain Roy Keane.

United are in excellent shape going into the semi-final first leg against the Italian giants at Old Trafford.

Alex Ferguson's treble-chasers remain top of the Premiership, have topped 100 goals for the season and have not lost for three-and-a-half months.

Add Jaap Stam's return from his ankle injury and Ryan Giggs' recovery from his hamstring problem, and things could hardly be better.

United have already put Inter Milan to the sword in the quarter-finals and now they believe they can

account for another Italian team in the semis.

"The feeling among the players is great and the confidence is sky high," said Keane. "We've been on a great run since Christmas and we haven't lost a game this year."

"We were a bit disappointed to draw 1-1 with

"It should definitely be a night to remember, and European nights at Old Trafford are brilliant."

"The fans were brilliant for Inter Milan, and I'm sure the atmosphere will be the same, if not better this time."

Keane missed last season's two clashes with

"I'm really looking forward to the challenge of playing against Juventus this time."

Juventus, who have appeared in the last three Champions' League finals, are not the force they were when United played them in 1996 and 1997.

They are well off the pace in the Serie A title race and have scraped their way through to the Champions' League semi-finals with two wins from their eight games.

However, like United, they are unbeaten in this season's competition, and Keane is not writing them off.

"Compared to their own high standards, they have had a disappointing season," he said. "But they've made it to the semi-finals of the European Cup, and we must respect them for that."

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Wimbledon on Saturday, but you can't have everything your own way.

"We'll prepare for this game slightly differently than we did for Wimbledon but we will treat Juventus with total respect as we did for Wimbledon."

"Make no mistake the boys will definitely be up for this one."

Juventus, including United's epic 3-2 victory at Old Trafford, because of his cruciate ligament injury.

He was disappointed to miss those and is keyed up for their semi-final. "The 3-2 last season was the Wednesday after I snapped my cruciate ligaments against Leeds so I missed the two games," he said.

World Youth Championship U.S. upset England, Spain beat Brazil

LAGOS (AFP) — The United States beat England in their opening match in the World Youth Championship on a hot night in Nigeria which also saw Spain put two goals past Brazil and some strong African performances.

The United States, playing in their first U-20s world championship, beat the young English side 1-0, the goal coming in the 11th minute from Dan Califf, in Kano in a Group E opening round match in the most striking upset to date in the tournament which opened here on Saturday.

England came into the match confidently but admitted before coming to west Africa they had brought a less-than-experienced side after leaving several top players, including senior World Cup star Michael Owen, at home.

And it showed.

In Calabar, Spain stopped the three-times winners from Brazil as Barcelona's Gabriel Francisco Garcia de la Torres, struck twice in the first half.

In the Group F match, Spain put on a display of solid defensive work and speed and skill in attack, winning the support of the crowd against a Brazilian side seemingly lacking in ideas for much of the match.

Gabri, as he is known, opened the scoring with an individual effort after 15 minutes and followed up 18 minutes later with a tap-in to complete his double, ending the scoring.

Portugal, which itself has won the competition in the past, was the only side to stick to form, beating South Korea 3-1 in Enugu.

Earlier, African teams scored a hat-trick of victories with Cameroon, Zambia and Mali all on target.

The young lions of Cameroon saw off a fighting display from Japan to win 2-1 in the heat of Kano, thanks to two headed goals from late substitute Gaspard Komol.

Japan controlled much of the play in the Group E match and appeared the better side technically, scoring first through Naohiro Takahara.

But the Cameroonians never gave up and Komol scored in the 73rd and 90th minutes to seal an African victory.

In Enugu, it was another 90th minute goal that saw unfancied Mali beat Uruguay 2-1 in their Group D game despite being reduced to 10 men from the 62nd minute.

In Calabar, Zambia and Honduras provided the fans with a goal feast, putting the ball in the net seven times between them as Zambia won 4-3.

Tuesday is a rest day in the championship which opened Saturday with a draw between Nigeria and Costa Rica, and saw Germany hammer Paraguay 4-0 Sunday.

McGwire and Mondesi join home run rush

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Mark McGwire started counting his home runs and Raul Mondesi made his home runs count on the first full day of play in the 1999 Major League baseball season on Monday.

McGwire, whose scintillating race with Sammy Sosa saw him rack up a stunning 70 homers last season, knocked one to right-centre field off David Weathers in St. Louis' opening game against the Milwaukee Brewers at Busch Stadium.

But as so often last season, McGwire's homer couldn't prevent a 10-8 Brewers victory.

Things were different in Los Angeles, where Mondesi grabbed the spotlight in a game billed as a showdown between high-priced pitchers Kevin Brown and Randy Johnson.

His three-run homer in the ninth inning leveled the score, and his two-run blast in the 11th lifted the Dodgers to an 8-6 victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks at Dodger Stadium.

"The first game is always the toughest and most exciting," said Davey Johnson, victorious in his first game as the manager of the Dodgers. "This is one of the best comebacks I've seen."

Neither Johnson nor Brown figured in the decision. Johnson gave up two runs and five hits over seven innings while walking six and striking out nine. Brown allowed three homers and was gone after 5 2/3 innings.

Another prominent player in a new uniform, Albert Belle, hit a three-run homer that gave the Baltimore Orioles the lead for good in a 10-7 victory over Tampa Bay. Belle hit 49 homers for the Chicago White Sox last year.

Darrin Jackson and Paul Konerko filled in nicely for Belle Monday, belting two-run homers off starter Jeff Fassero to lead the White Sox to an 8-2 rout of the Seattle Mariners.

A departure due to injury led to a dramatic homer in Cincinnati, where Bill Mueller's broken left big toe turned out to be a break for the San Francisco Giants.

Charlie Hayes, Mueller's replacement, belted a go-ahead three-run homer in the top of the eighth as the Giants rallied for a wild 11-8 victory over the Reds.

The Detroit Tigers, who won just 65 games last season, belted three homers, including three-run blasts from Bobby Higginson and Damion Easley, to pound the Texas Rangers 11-5.

In another early American League game, John Valentin hit a two-run homer to help the Boston Red Sox beat Kansas City 5-3.

Vladimir Guerrero homered and drove in four runs and Dustin Hermanson allowed one run over seven innings as the Montreal Expos pasted the Pittsburgh Pirates, 9-2.

Davis Cup is a tough sell in United States

LONDON (AP) — Even with his big victory, Jim Courier knew it was not enough. The Davis Cup does not stir the passions of American sports fans.

"I think there's too much competition in America, sportswise, for that realistically to change in the near future," he said.

Courier's two singles victories carried the United States to a 3-2 decision over Britain in the first round. His match Sunday was the clincher, a 6-4, 6-7 (3-7), 6-3, 1-6, 8-6 decision over Greg Rusedski in Birmingham.

The American victory came on the same day the baseball season opened. The NHL was moving toward the playoffs and the NBA was in the thick of its schedule. The masters was waiting in the wings.

But even in ideal conditions, the Davis Cup is a tough sell in the United States. And not only with fans. Two of its best players, Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi, took a pass on the U.S.-Britain series.

Tim Henman, who with Rusedski formed a two-man British team, can't understand why sampras no longer plays Davis Cup.

"I think it's great to be a part of it, but at the end of the day it's his decision," Henman said. "If he doesn't want to be part of it, if anything, it's his loss."

Henman, who practices with Sampras and has teamed with him in doubles, says the Davis Cup matched playing Wimbledon, an event Sampras has won five times.

Courier's singles partner, Todd Martin, in the wake of what the daily telegraph called the "most memorable davis cup tie in Britain since the war," said he sympathized with calls to modify the davis cup. One suggestion is to play every two years instead of annually.

"There are still flaws," Martin said, "after this there's three months ... before the next tie, and



Jim Courier



Tim Henman

that's a flaw." "But I don't see how this can't excite

people about tennis, especially about the Davis Cup." U.S. captain Tom Gullikson, who must constantly lobby the top players for the Davis Cup, said courier and martin would play in the quarterfinals in July in Coston against Australia — even if Sampras and Andre Agassi come aboard.

"These guys have the first option, absolutely," gullikson said.

And like Martin, Gullikson admits the Davis Cup needs help.

"On the ATP Tour they could advertise that they play Davis Cup for their country," he added. "They sometimes spout off tour records. This should be a part of the introduction at tournaments. You want to promote the fact that they play for their country."

In the United States, with a record 31 Davis Cup victories and 28 times a runner-up, the event has lost its glow. Not so in Britain, which hasn't won the cup since 1936 and is back in the World Group (the Davis Cup elite 16) for the first time since 1992.

This may have been a defeat, but the British media played it with banner headlines, full-page photos, some page one news treatment and blanket television coverage.

"Britain's aces beaten but not defeated," the times said on its front page, sharing space with two stories on the nato airstrikes.

"Britain's cup of tears," said a headline topping Monday's the daily telegraph sports section.

"Britain broken on the rock," the Guardian said in reference to Courier.

The London tabloids were rougher.

"What a choker," said the Mirror alongside a photo of a dejected Rusedski. "Choked to Brits," said the rival the Sun.

Australia to appeal Davis Cup tie switch

SYDNEY (AFP) — Tennis Australia is to appeal to the International Tennis Federation over its loss of home advantage for Australia's Davis Cup quarter-final with the United States in July.

Under normal Davis Cup regulations, Australia would host the tie as the last game between the two nations was in the U.S. in 1997. However, the ITF decided two years ago to celebrate the centenary of the Davis Cup by ensuring a U.S. tie would be played in Boston, the city where the Cup was born.

Scheduled for July 16-18, the tie will feature the two most successful countries in Davis Cup history commemorating the first Cup tie between the U.S. and Britain in 1900.

TA President Geoff Pollard said Tuesday the appeal would be based on three criteria.

"Firstly, Australia encountered the USA in Washington in September 1997, and under the Davis Cup regulations, we therefore have the right to host our next meeting," Pollard said.

"Secondly, I believe Australia

can stage a better celebration in Melbourne Park with a capacity crowd of 15,000 in the world's best tennis venue as opposed to a match in Boston with a crowd of 5,000 in an ageing stadium.

"Based on our record, Australia has as much right to commemorate the Centenary as the USA and therefore will appeal to the ITF to maintain normal home and away rights that have been integral to the competition throughout its 100 year history."

Initial reaction from the ITF's London office was less than optimistic about the chances of the tie being switched to Australia.

Davis Cup office spokeswoman Debbie Bamlett told Australian Associated Press that the ITF's board of directors would consider an appeal if it was lodged, but said "preparations are already well in hand in Boston."

If Britain had beaten the U.S. in its first round tie in Birmingham at the weekend Australia would have hosted the British in the quarter-final in Brisbane, Melbourne or Perth, but the Americans triumphed 3-2.

Australian team captain John

Newcombe said he was disappointed at the prospect of playing the quarterfinal in the U.S.

"It's just unfortunate they did this rule two years ago," Newcombe said from Harare following Australia's 4-1 win over Zimbabwe.

"Who was going to argue against it at the time because nobody knew that they'd be affected."

"But it affects us. We should be playing them at home. I think it's a fait accompli and nothing can be done about it."

If Australia win the Boston quarter-final they will host a semifinal in September against the winner of the Russia-Slovak Republic quarter-final.

Sampras maintains slim ATP lead

PARIS (AFP) — Leading ATP Tour men's tennis rankings issued here on Monday:

1. Pete Sampras (USA) 3525pts
2. Carlos Moya (Spa) 3516
3. Yevgeny Kafelnikov (Rus) 3382
4. Richard Krajicek (Ned) 3119
5. Patrick Rafter (Aus) 3115
6. Alex Corretja (Spa) 3101
7. Tim Henman (Gbr) 2633
8. Todd Martin (USA) 2279
9. Mark Philippoussis (Aus) 2264
10. Karol Kucera (Svk) 2253
11. Greg Rusedski (Gbr) 2126
12. Andre Agassi (USA) 2071
13. Marcelo Rios (Chi) 2035
14. Goran Ivanisevic (Cro) 1929
15. Thomas Enqvist (Swe) 1898

16. Albert Costa (Spa) 1800
17. Thomas Johansson (Swe) 1614
18. Gustavo Kuerten (Bra) 1608
19. Tommy Haas (Ger) 1600
20. Felix Mantilla (Spa) 1589
21. Cedric Pioline (Fra) 1520
22. Francisco Clavet (Spa) 1450
23. Marat Safin (Rus) 1254
24. Thomas Muster (Aut) 1224
25. Jerome Golmard (Fra) 1210
26. Nicolas Kiefer (Ger) 1198
27. Marc Rosset (Swi) 1181
28. Alberto Berasategui (Spa) 1167
29. Byron Black (Zim) 1164
30. Wayne Ferreira (Rsa) 1161



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CINEMA TEL:5899238
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Leonardo Di Caprio ...in

TITANIC

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Julia Roberts ...in STEPMOM

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LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Pakistani coach to train squash team

AMMAN — The Jordan Squash Federation, working on upgrading the competitive level of the national teams ahead of the 9th Pan-Arab Games — Al Hussein Tournament, has contracted a professional coach to train the players. Suhail Qaisar, 31, a Pakistani trainer who led his country's teams to win world titles, was recently coaching the Pakistani youth team who won the Asian Championship. He participated in several international events in past years and was ranked 11th in the world standings. Qaisar was Pakistan's youth champ in the 1980's and was named the world's best youth player before leading the Pakistani team to the 1992 Asian Championship. He was a member of the Pakistani team, which won the gold medal in Cairo's international championship.

Mamsar amends allowances

AMMAN — Minister of Youth and Sports Mohammad Kheir Mamsar decided to amend allowances, per diems and salaries of team officials and athletes for the Pan-Arab Games effective April 1 and running until Sep. 1. Amounts paid for the officials depend on whether they are part-time or full-timers and are as follows: Salaries of full time Jordanian or foreign trainers will be determined in accordance with their contracts signed with sports federations; assistant trainers from JD150-JD300; team managers from JD75-JD250; team therapist from JD100-JD200. For transportation and other per diems athletes will be provided with JD3.5 within the Greater Amman Municipality, and others in the rest of the Kingdom's governorates will take JD4-JD10. As for daily pocket money, athletes will get JD10 while on training courses in Arab countries and JD12 in foreign countries, while managers, referees and therapists will take JD12 in Arab countries and JD15 abroad. The head of delegation will receive JD15 in Arab countries and JD20 in foreign countries. Full-time athletes training twice a day, six days a week will be getting as much as JD300 a month.

SCOREBOARD

FIFA World Youth Championship

Group D			
South Korea	1	Portugal	3
Uruguay	1	Mali	2
Group E			
Cameroun	2	Japan	1
England	0	United States	1
Group F			
Spain	2	Brazil	0
Zambia	4	Honduras	3

NBA

Atlanta	77	Charlotte	71
Orlando	106	Boston	99
Indiana	88	Detroit	86
Minnesota	100	Dallas	93
San Antonio	93	Golden State	86
LA Lakers	117	Denver	104

Dutch First Division

T. Enschede	1	Utrecht	1
Feyenoord	1	Sparta Rotterdam	0

English Premiership

Coventry City	1	Southampton	0
Everton	1	S. Wednesday	2
Middlesbrough	3	Wimbledon	1
N. Forest	2	Liverpool	2
W. H. United	0	Charlton Ath.	1
N. United	1	Tot. Hotspur	1

American League

Boston	5	Kansas City	3
Detroit	11	Texas	5
Baltimore	10	Tampa Bay	7
Oakland	5	NY Yankees	3 (8 Innings)
White Sox	8	Seattle	2

National League

San Francisco	11	Cincinnati	8
Florida	6	NY Mets	2
Philadelphia	7	Atlanta	4
LA	8	Arizona	6
Montreal	9	Pittsburgh	2
Milwaukee	10	St Louis	8

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Dakar Rally in 2000 to end in Cairo

PARIS (AP) — The famed Dakar Rally will bypass Europe in the year 2000, beginning in Senegal and ending in Egypt, the event's organizers announced Tuesday. The race is scheduled to begin Jan. 6 in Dakar and to end in Cairo Jan. 23. The race used to begin in Paris and end in Dakar. But this year, the route was changed, with competitors starting in Granada, Spain. Participants will gather in Paris late December for technical checkups, after which their cars will be paraded past Parisian monuments, including the Eiffel Tower and the Arc de Triomphe as part of France's millennium celebrations, organizers said. It will be the 22nd edition of the race.

Greek club to play Belgrade

ATHENS (AFP) — A team of volunteers representing top Greek side AEK left for Belgrade on Tuesday for a friendly match despite NATO air raids on the Serb capital. Team captain Dennis Nikolaidis said the one-hour match against Partisans of Belgrade on Wednesday was to show Greek solidarity with the Serbs. "By our visit we want to give a message of peace and courage," said Nikolaidis.

Wizards sack Bickerstaff

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Bernie Bickerstaff Monday became the fourth National Basketball Association coach to lose his job this season, after leading the Washington Wizards to a 13-19 start. Bickerstaff, 55, will be replaced on an interim basis by assistant Jim Brounelli, while Mike Brown and John Outlaw will remain on the staff. Bickerstaff joins Del Harris, who was fired by the Los Angeles Lakers on Feb. 26, Dave Cowens, who parted ways with the Charlotte Hornets on March 7, and John Calipari, who was dumped by the New Jersey Nets on March 15.

Jalabert wins 1st stage of Basque Tour

TOLOSA, Spain (AFP) — French star Laurent Jalabert, riding for the ONCE team, on Monday won the 115km first stage of the Tour of the Basque Country cycling tournament. In a sprint finish the 30-year-old came in ahead of Italy's Davide Rebellin in a time of 2hr 51min 47sec. Dutch champion Michael Boogerd came in third 21 seconds behind the leaders. This is Jalabert's second win since he took the Catalan Week cycling tournament last month in his first victory since he became French champion at the beginning of last summer. Jalabert and the ONCE team withdrew in the final week of the 1998 Tour de France in protest at what they saw as the aggressive manner in which the police handled the drugs scandal. The team also pulled out of the Paris-Nice race in March because it wanted to stay away from France after last year's doping scandal. France's Richard Virenque, charged last week with breaking France's anti-doping laws by magistrates investigating last year's Tour de France drugs scandal, was placed 44th in Monday's race 54 seconds behind the leaders.

USA-Croatia Fed Cup tie in Raleigh

WHITE PLAINS, New York (AFP) — The Fed Cup tie between the United States and Croatia originally scheduled for Zagreb and moved to the States due to security concerns will be held in Raleigh, North Carolina. Due to the military conflict in Kosovo, the International Tennis Federation opted to move the April 17-18 tie to the United States. The United States Tennis Association Monday announced that the Raleigh Racquet Club would host the event. U.S. Fed Cup captain Billie Jean King will announce the remainder of the U.S. team on Tuesday. Lindsay Davenport, the world's second-ranked player, already has been named and Iva Majoli is expected to play for Croatia. The Raleigh Racquet Club features an outdoor claycourt and has a capacity of 2,500.

Hall of Fame pitcher dead at 79

COOPERSTOWN, New York (AFP) — Hall of Famer and 300-game winner Early Wynn died Sunday night at the age of 79, a spokesman for the baseball shrine said. The Hall of Fame could not confirm where Wynn died but said he had been at a rest home in Sarasota, Florida, after suffering from a "litany of health problems." Wynn was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1972, nine years after retiring.

Venus Williams puts streak on line at Amelia Island

AMELIA ISLAND (AFP)

— Venus Williams, one half of the hottest sister act in tennis, will be in action at the Bausch and Lomb Championships, which started here Monday.

The third-seeded American has won her last two tournaments — at Oklahoma City and the Lipton Championships in Key Biscayne. She has lost just one time in her last 14 matches, defeating her younger sister, Serena, for the Lipton crown.

Williams will be making her 1999 claycourt debut against Sonya Jeyaseelan, a Canadian qualifier who received the opportunity to try to cool off Williams with a 3-6, 6-2, 6-2 victory over Spain's Gala Leon Garcia.

Jeyaseelan does have one factor working in her favor: Williams is a bit unfamiliar with clay, which does not best suit her power game. She played just two events on the surface last year, losing to Martina Hingis in the final of the Italian Open and again in the quarter-finals of the French Open.

Six seeds played Monday, although No. 1 Lindsay Davenport of the United States, who hopes to be fully recovered from an injured wrist, was not among them.

Davenport's strained left wrist forced her to default a quarter-final match to Steffi Graf at the Lipton Championships and pull out of last week's Family Circle Cup at Hilton Head.

The 1997 champion here, Davenport has not reached a final since winning the Sydney International in January. She will play Tina Pisnik of Slovakia, who advanced with a 6-3, 1-6, 6-3 victory over American Brie Rippner.

Second seed Monica Seles



Mary Pierce

of the United States will try to break out of a slump this week. Seles has lost in the third round in two of her last three tournaments and in the fourth round at the Lipton.

Seles, who lost in the third round here last year, went 15-4 on clay in 1998, reaching the final of the French Open.

Her first match will be against Kvetia Hrdlickova of the Czech Republic, who defeated Barbara Rittner of

Germany 4-6, 6-3, 7-5.

Defending champion Mary Pierce of France will make her first appearance on clay this season when she faces Catalina Cristea of Romania, who cruised past American qualifier Alexandra Stevenson, 6-3, 6-0.

South African Amanda Coetzer is seeded fifth, followed by Patty Schnyder of Switzerland, 1995 champion and last year's runner-up Conchita Martinez, of Spain

and Barbara Schett of Austria. The top eight seeds received first-round byes.

In other matches Monday: Magui Serna of Spain cruised past Argentine qualifier Maria Jose Gaidano 6-3, 6-2. Virginia Ruano Pascual of Spain routed American Sandra Cacic 6-2, 6-1, and Nathalie Dechy of France defeated wild card Meilen Tu of the United States 6-2, 6-3.

Pacers beat Pistons; Hornets, Nuggets lose

DETROIT (R) — Antonio Davis, who collected 17 points and nine rebounds, scored the go-ahead three-point play with 1:37 to play and rejected Grant Hill with less than a minute remaining to lift the Indiana Pacers to an 88-86 victory over the Pistons in a key Central Division battle.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, veteran Grant Long keyed a pivotal second-half run and Dikembe Mutombo had 11 points, 14 rebounds and six blocks as the Atlanta Hawks posted a 77-71 victory over the Charlotte Hornets.

At the Lakers, the Denver

Nuggets' Nick Van Exel, who spent his first five seasons with the Los Angeles Lakers, scored a career-high 41 points but Kobe Bryant had 17 in the fourth quarter as Los Angeles pulled away for a 117-104 victory over the Nuggets.

Bryant and Glen Rice scored 26 points apiece. Dennis Rodman collected 17 rebounds for Los Angeles.

In Minneapolis, rookie Andrae Patterson and Tom Hammonds led a second-quarter bench surge and the Minnesota Timberwolves shut down Michael Finley in a 100-93 victory over the

Dallas Mavericks, their fourth straight triumph.

In Orlando, Darrell Armstrong, the leading candidate for the sixth man award, scored a career-high 28 points as the Orlando Magic avenged their worst loss of the year with a 106-99 victory over the Boston Celtics.

In San Antonio, David Robinson finished two blocked shots shy of a triple-double and Tim Duncan five blocks short as the San Antonio Spurs completed a six-game homestand with a 93-86 victory over the Golden State Warriors, extending their winning streak to five games.

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Medvedev wins in Estoril Open

OEIRAS (AP) — Russia's Andrei Medvedev beat Spain's Carlos Costa 1-6, 6-2, 7-6 (7-4) Monday in the first round of the Estoril Open, the traditional opener of the European clay-court season.

In the women's tournament, which is part of the WTA Tour for the first time this year, fourth-seed Elena Wagner of Germany defeated countrywoman Jana Kandarr 4-6, 6-3, 6-2.

The men's top two seeds — Russia's Yevgeny Kafelnikov and American Todd Martin — as well as two-time winner Thomas Muster of Austria were scheduled to play their first-round matches Tuesday.

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The Young Muslim Women's Association (YMWA) in Jordan announces its campaign aimed at collecting donations and in-kind contributions to assist the Kosovo Albanian refugees.

The in-kind contributions are limited to blankets and clothing items of all sizes. The Young Muslim Women's Association appeals to your generosity to support this campaign and its representatives will start receiving donations and contributions as of Wednesday, April 7th 1999 at the Princess Sarvath Community College (PSCC) between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. daily. Receipts are provided for income tax exemption purposes. Packages should be labelled indicating kind and size of clothes.

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Netanyahu backs away from Sharon warning of threat from Kosovo

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu backed away from remarks Tuesday by his foreign minister about the threat to Europe posed by a possible Muslim state of Kosovo, saying Israel should not interfere.

"The Israeli government should not meddle in the future arrangements of Kosovo," he said in a statement, stressing that Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon was expressing "only his personal opinion."

He also underlined his "total support for NATO's action to put an end to the tragedy in the Balkans as quickly as possible."

Sharon told Israeli radio earlier that Kosovo could unite with Albania after independence, leading to a greater Islamic state that would be a danger to European stability.

"The free world must heed the risk posed by the possible independence of Kosovo," Sharon said.

"A large Muslim state in the region, which for hun-

dreds of years has been unstable and led to serious wars, could be a base for Islamic extremism threatening all of Europe," he said.

"The United States and NATO must stop the tragedy of Kosovo's refugees as soon as possible, but they cannot ignore the long-term political stakes created by the situation," he said.

Defence Minister Moshe Arens said earlier Tuesday that Israel gave its full backing to NATO air strikes on Yugoslavia, as five plane loads of humanitarian aid for Kosovo refugees headed to Europe.

"We fully support the NATO action in Yugoslavia," Arens told Israeli radio, adding: "If only there had been an armed intervention to prevent the Holocaust."

The Israeli government had previously refrained from backing the NATO attacks, or condemning Serbia for its actions in Kosovo, where ethnic Albanians have been

slaughtered and others forced to flee.

Four Israeli airforce planes left Tel Aviv on Tuesday loaded with aid destined for a vast refugee camp set up north of the Macedonian capital of Skopje.

Israel has already sent a 70-member medical team to help set up a hospital in the camp.

"For a small country like ours, our aid is considerable," Arens said.

A fifth plane leased by the Jewish Agency with 10 tonnes of medicines and baby food also left on Tuesday for Albania. The first air force plane left Friday with \$100,000 worth of medical equipment and clothes donated by the Israeli government for Kosovo refugees in Albania and Macedonia.

Israeli radio has reported an enthusiastic public response to appeals from the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organisation for donations for the refugees.



A HOME DESTROYED: Lazar Antic, a Serb, wipes tears from his eyes in front of his house, which was hit in a NATO air strike in the town of Aleksinac, some 200 kms south of Belgrade early Tuesday. Local officials said that 12 people were killed and over 30 injured when three NATO cruise missiles hit residential area in this southern Serbian town (AP photo)

Lockerbie suspects formally charged

CAMP ZEIST (R) — Scottish police formally charged two Libyans on Tuesday with the 1988 bombing murder of the Pan Am Flight 103 and 11 people on the ground below in Lockerbie, Scotland.

Libya handed over Abdul Basset Megrahi, 47, and Al Amin Khalifa Fhimma, 43, on Monday for trial before a Scottish court in the Netherlands after years of tortuous negotiations.

Police fingerprinted the men, photographed them and took DNA samples. Charging them, they read out the 270 names of those who died. Translators relayed the remarks to the suspects in Arabic.

Soon afterwards, the two men made a five-minute appearance before Scottish Sheriff Principal Graham Cox to confirm their identities and access

to defence lawyers. They made no plea or declaration, a court official said.

"The men are charged with conspiracy, murder, and contravention of the Aviation Security Act 1982," the official told reporters.

The suspects have been committed for further judicial examination, probably next week, and will be held on remand.

After the hearing they were transferred from the police cell where they spent their first night in custody to a makeshift prison within Camp Zeist compound.

The detention facility on the former U.S. military airbase, near the central city of Utrecht, has been renamed Her Majesty's Prison, Zeist, complete with a royal coat of arms. Scottish officials joked it was the smallest prison in the world.

London and Washington have accused Megrahi and Fhimma, allegedly Libyan secret agents, of planting the suitcase bomb that downed Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie on Dec. 21, 1988, killing 270 people.

Both men deny the charges. They arrived at Camp Zeist on Monday night by helicopter after their "extradition" to British soil from the Netherlands.

Earlier the same day, they had left Tripoli aboard a U.N. aircraft. The handover marked the end of 10 years of wrangling between Britain, the U.S. and Libya.

Four translators are in place in Camp Zeist, which the Dutch have ceded to Britain during the trial. A prayer room has been made available for the accused and they will be served halal food that meets Islamic dietary requirements.

Under Scottish law, suspects can wear their own clothes.

Police officers armed with submachine guns patrolled inside the metal fence of the compound which lies in quiet countryside.

Legal experts said the trial could be the longest and most expensive criminal case in Scottish history. It may not get started for six months if defence lawyers win extra time to map out a case to counter a long list of prosecution witnesses.

U.N. sanctions imposed on Libya over the past seven years were suspended hours after the men arrived in the Netherlands.

On Tuesday, Russia and Gulf nations hailed the handover of the two men. The United States and Britain also welcomed the transfer, but the U.S. said it planned to maintain its own sanctions against Libya.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Netanyahu says PNA 'anti-gay'

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office has warned Jewish homosexual organisations that the Palestinian National Authority has a "negative attitude towards gays," a newspaper reported Tuesday. Netanyahu's office sent a letter to the World Congress of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Jewish Organisations along with a newspaper article containing an interview with Palestinian police chief Ghazi Jabali, the Haaretz newspaper said. The article in the Hebrew weekly Yerushalayim, entitled "Palestinian Police Chief Maligns Homosexuals," contained remarks by Jabali in reference to a Palestinian police officer executed in February for sodomising a six-year-old Palestinian boy. Haaretz said the letter was part of a "continuing propaganda campaign against the Palestinian Authority" by the prime minister's office.

Israel expels relatives of SLA deserters

RASHAYA (AFP) — Israel on Tuesday expelled the relatives of the four militiamen who deserted from its proxy South Lebanon Army (SLA) over the weekend, police said. At least 25 people, mostly elderly, women and children, were taken from their homes in the village of Shebaa in the eastern sector of the Israeli-occupied zone in southern Lebanon. The relatives were transported to the Zimraa passageway, from where they walked on foot some three kilometres toward the first Lebanese army checkpoint, police said. The expulsions came after the troops, three Sunni Muslims and one Christian, deserted on Sunday, sneaking out of the border zone and then handing themselves over to the Lebanese army outside the enclave. They brought to six the number of SLA deserters in the past month.

Two Palestinians arrested for assault

DEIR ABU MISHAL (AFP) — The Israeli army said Tuesday it has arrested two Palestinians over the wounding of a young Israeli girl last week. A military spokesman said the two men admitted wounding the girl as they were throwing stones at Israeli vehicles in the village of Deir Abu Mishal, northwest of Ramallah. The army had arrested around 18 Palestinians over the incident and set up road blocks controlling access to the area.

Ocalan pleads for pardon — report

ANKARA (AP) — Imprisoned Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan has reportedly offered to urge his guerrillas to surrender in exchange for a pardon for himself, according to a Turkish daily. Ocalan's offer was reported Tuesday by the daily Sabah, a week after he reportedly disapproved of a recent spate of attacks attributed to Kurdish groups avenging his capture. Prosecutors did not return calls for comment. The report, which was reported by Sabah alone, could not be verified independently. "I am regretful. Give me a chance. I want a pardon from the state. If the pardon is granted I would ensure the surrender of all PKK members," Sabah quoted Ocalan as telling prosecutors over the weekend. "This homeland is also my homeland. This state is also my state. Give me a chance and I will give good service to my country," Ocalan reportedly said. The PKK command has announced it would disregard any calls by Ocalan, saying they would be made under duress.

PKK claims suicide bombing

ANKARA (AFP) — The Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) has claimed responsibility for a suicide bomb attack against the governor of Bingol province, the German-based Kurdish news agency DEM said in a statement received here Tuesday. A suicide bomber blew himself up on Monday when he set off explosives wrapped around his body as the governor, Suleyman Kamci, was entering his office in Bingol, southeastern Anatolia. Kamci escaped the attack unharmed, but a teenage girl was killed along with the bomber, and 20 people were injured. DEM quoted the Kurdistan People's Liberation Army (ARPK), the PKK's armed wing, as saying that the suicide bomber was a member of the ARPK's forces in the eastern Anatolian province of Erzurum.

Iraq denies military ties with Yugoslavia

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan on Tuesday denied any military cooperation with Belgrade, despite Baghdad's verbal support for Yugoslavia in the face of NATO strikes. "It's just another lie to add to earlier lies from the U.S. administration and President [Bill] Clinton," Ramadan told journalists who asked about U.S. and British reports of military cooperation. U.S. Defence Department spokesman Kenneth Bacon said last week that Yugoslavia could be planning military cooperation with Iraq, which has faced U.S. and British air strikes since December.

Four executed in Iraq for cleric's murder

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq said on Tuesday it had executed four men for the murder of a prominent Shiite Muslim spiritual leader and his sons in the holy city of Najaf last February.

The killing of Mohammad Sadeq Al Sadr, an influential cleric whose Friday prayer sermons drew large crowds, and his sons Mustafa and Muja'wil sparked widespread riots in the country, according to Iraqi opposition groups.

The government denied there was unrest.

The Iraqi news agency INA, quoting a statement from the Iraqi security service, named the executed men as Abdul Hassan Abbas Al Kufi, Ali Kadhim Jumani, Ahmad Mustafa Hassan Ardabili and Haider Ali Hussein Ardabili.

"These criminals had assassinated the late martyr, Mohammad Sadeq Al Sadr, and his sons, Mustafa and Muja'wil," the statement said.

"These criminals were executed in accordance with a decision issued by a specialised court," the statement added. It did not say when and where the executions took place.

Iraq has previously said that some of the executed men were students of a religious academy in Najaf, about 160 km south of Baghdad.

Algerian Islamists back ex-FM for president

BONN (AFP) — Algeria's rebel Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) on Tuesday urged voters to support ex-foreign minister Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi in a presidential election in his conflict-ridden country next week.

"Vote massively and courageously for Dr. Ahmad Taleb Ibrahimi," said a communiqué issued by the FIS's overseas branch, Taleb Ibrahimi "is sincerely working for the well-being and the realisation of the nation's hopes," it said.

The communiqué said Taleb Ibrahimi was "the man best able to assemble Algerians and best capable to pull the country from tragedy."

Taleb Ibrahimi, one of seven candidates in the presidential election, was foreign minister between 1979 and 1992. In a poll published in January he was expected to come first in the first round of early presi-

dential elections called by the incumbent Liamine Zeroul and slated for on April 15.

The poll estimated that Taleb Ibrahimi could take 24 per cent of the votes.

"The FIS communiqué said that after a 'scrupulous evaluation' of the platforms of all the presidential candidates, most had been found to be peace-loving and supporting social justice.

The vote will take place amid a new upsurge of violence between security forces and Islamist extremists that has claimed nearly 300 lives since the beginning of March.

Clashes began after the cancellation in January 1992 of the second round of a general election the now-outlawed FIS was poised to win, and the death toll since has been some 30,000, according to Algerian figures, and up to 100,000, according to foreign estimates.

Tehran mayor denied appeal

TEHRAN (R) — Iran's supreme court rejected an appeal by Tehran's suspended Mayor Gholamhossein Karbaschi, paving the way for his possible imprisonment on graft charges this week, the judiciary announced on Tuesday.

Karbaschi, 45, a reformer close to President Mohammad Khatami, has been sentenced to two years in jail, banned from executive office for 10 years and ordered to pay 1.6 billion rials (\$333,000) in fines and restitution.

Appointed Tehran mayor in 1989, he revitalised the ramshackle and war-hit capital with an effective network of freeways and built parks, supermarkets and cultural centres.

Many of these were paid for by an informal tax of up to 30 per cent of the value of development projects in exchange for municipal permits. "Air rights" for office towers and apartment buildings were sold at a hefty price.

The "Karbaschi system" generated a huge, unregulated cash flow, and critics have long charged that some of the proceeds were diverted to personal gain for the mayor and his circle, while other funds went to back Khatami's election drive.

The daily Iran, published by the official IRNA news agency, had earlier reported the rejection of the mayor's appeal.

Karbaschi's attorney Bahman Keshavarz told Reuters he was exploring other channels to keep his client from going to jail.

"We are making another appeal to the supreme court. We hope it produces some results," he said, adding that the supreme court could decide to throw out the sentence and order retrial, or even drop the case altogether if it decided it had been mishandled.

Karbaschi's jailing would be a blow to Khatami's embattled reformist government which had strongly backed him against the charges raised by the conservative-led judiciary.

Egypt debates closing legal loophole for rapists

By Tarek Tablawy
The Associated Press

CAIRO — For the young Egyptian woman, hell has 12 faces, and they are seared into her memory. They are the faces of the men who gang-raped her for three days until she was rescued by villagers.

The three men allegedly abducted the 21-year-old are in custody, and police say they are looking for nine others accused of joining in the sexual assault in February.

If convicted, the men could be sentenced to death. But there is a loophole in the rape law: all the defendants would be set free if one of them married the woman — not an unusual occurrence in Egypt, where shame over a rape often falls on the victim rather than the perpetrator.

A marriage agreement would have to be worked out quickly, though. The marriage escape appears on the way out. Long quietly accepted, the loophole has drawn rising criticism in recent years, and President Hosni Mubarak issued a decree Saturday to end it. The decree still needs legislative approval, but while the marriage loophole has support among lawmakers, parliament usually rubber stamps Mubarak's decisions.

A vote is expected sometime this month.

The government newspaper Al Ahram quoted the minister of justice, Farouk Seif Nasser, as saying the old law has "encouraged the criminals to perpetrate their crime instead of deterring them."

Families of rape victims have used the provision since 1904 as a way to regain honour through marriage of a woman viewed by Egyptian society as tainted.

Relatives of the woman who was gang-raped in February have not commented on whether they want her to marry one of her attackers.

In a highly publicised case a year ago, a 17-year-old girl was raped in Cairo by four

men. Five days before her attackers were to be sentenced, her mother presented a marriage certificate to the court indicating the girl had married the primary defendant. All four men were released.

Cases like these have fed the campaign seeking to abolish the loophole and also brought discussion of the sexual abuse of women into Egypt's newspapers, which not long ago rarely reported on rapes.

With the stigma associated with rape still so great in Egypt that in some rural areas the victim is killed to restore honour to her and her family, supporters say the marriage loophole is in women's interest.

"It could be her only chance to get married," says Mohammad Musa, a top legislator and supporter of the law.

"It is a licence to rape," counters Magda Adly, a counsellor at the Nadim Centre for Victims of Violence.

She cites a 1996 case in which a 60-year-old school principal raped a 15-year-old

student. The girl was forced by her father to marry her attacker.

"It's not enough that she was [emotionally] slaughtered by the rape. By marrying the rapist, she has the opportunity to be slaughtered again" in a marriage lacking respect, Adly says.

Religious leaders, often viewed by women's groups as opponents to their efforts to secure equal rights under law, generally support abolishing the marriage-option provision.

Sheikh Nasser Farid Wasel, the government's top cleric, has decreed that the pressure a victim faces to marry her attacker is inconsistent with the anity and mercy that form the basis of a proper Islamic marriage.

Statistics on rape are generally nonexistent. Barely 80 cases were reported in 1997, the English-language Al Ahram Weekly reported recently. Most rapes are believed to go unreported out of shame and fear.

Egypt also lacks shelters and counseling services for rape victims.

And the courts, first and last recourse for the women, are bound by the marriage-option law, says Yasser Abdul Jawad, director of the Centre for Egyptian Women's Legal Aid.

Public pressure, however, has forced the government to amend rape laws from time to time.

In 1992, a woman boarding a bus in a crowded Cairo square was pulled off by two men who raped her on the sidewalk in front of dozens of witnesses. The men were acquitted.

Demonstrations ensued and the case prompted parliament to stiffen the harshest penalty for rape from life imprisonment to execution.

Worshippers witness to church robbery

METAIRIE (R) — A masked man held 100 worshippers at gunpoint in a Louisiana church on Easter Sunday while he robbed them of cash and driver's licences. "He wore a ski mask... The only clue we have is that he had some sort of fat-tou or scar above his right cheek," Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office Colonel John Fortunato said. Vicky Wagner, 48, of the Rivertown Congregation Jehovah's Witnesses Board of Elders, said the robber entered the suburban New Orleans Kingdom Hall 15 minutes after the service began. A few members of the congregation walked through the hall collecting cash for the robber. "The only complaint he had was that there were too many one dollar bills," Wagner said. After the robber left, the congregation offered prayers of thanks that nobody was hurt and then called the police.

Sheep called in to battle kudzu

TALLAHASSEE (R) — Parks officials in Florida's capital city are chewing over a plan to tame an overabundance of kudzu by bringing in hungry sheep to munch the ubiquitous vines down to size. "It would cost us hundreds of thousands of dollars to clear out the kudzu," the Tallahassee Democrat Newspaper quoted Parks and Recreation Department's Chuck Goodheart as saying. "Sheep would get out there and say, 'ooh, I really like those sprouts.'" Kudzu vines were imported from Asia into the southeastern United States in the 1900s by railroad workers, who counted on the deep tuber-like roots to shore up embankments.

Football player finds scheduling a problem

LONDON (R) — Franck late telephone calls to players before a match to get a team together is often part of local amateur soccer but English First Division West Bromwich Albion were forced to adopt the tactic at the weekend. Dutch striker Fabian Defraets missed his team's 5-1 defeat by Crewe on Monday afternoon because he thought the game was an evening kick-off. British newspapers reported on Tuesday. As the clock ticked down to the 3 p.m. start, officials from the Midlands club tried to reach Defraets on the telephone but could not get through because his girlfriend was on the line. The player now faces a heavy fine for the mistake.

Garden gnomes return after widow's plea

FRANKFURT (R) — Thieves gave back 13 garden gnomes to a German widow after she appealed for their return in a newspaper advertisement. "My late husband collected them," 75-year-old Erna V. said. "Please bring back the gnomes." Her plea was heard. Over Easter all the gnomes reappeared in her garden, the mass circulation Bild newspaper reported on Tuesday.

Internet relationship lands man in trouble

PERTH (AFP) — A man landed in court Tuesday charged with attempting to extort money from a shopkeeper to fund a trip to America to meet a woman he had developed an Internet relationship with. Scott Goodsell, 20, admitted in Perth's District Court that he rang the owner of a car service station in January demanding 5,000 Australian dollars (\$3,200) because he was desperate to make the journey. Judge Kevin Hammond said Goodsell's crime was "totally out of character" and described it as bizarre and naive. He placed him under a two-year community service order.